

PZ 3

.B841

N

COPY 1

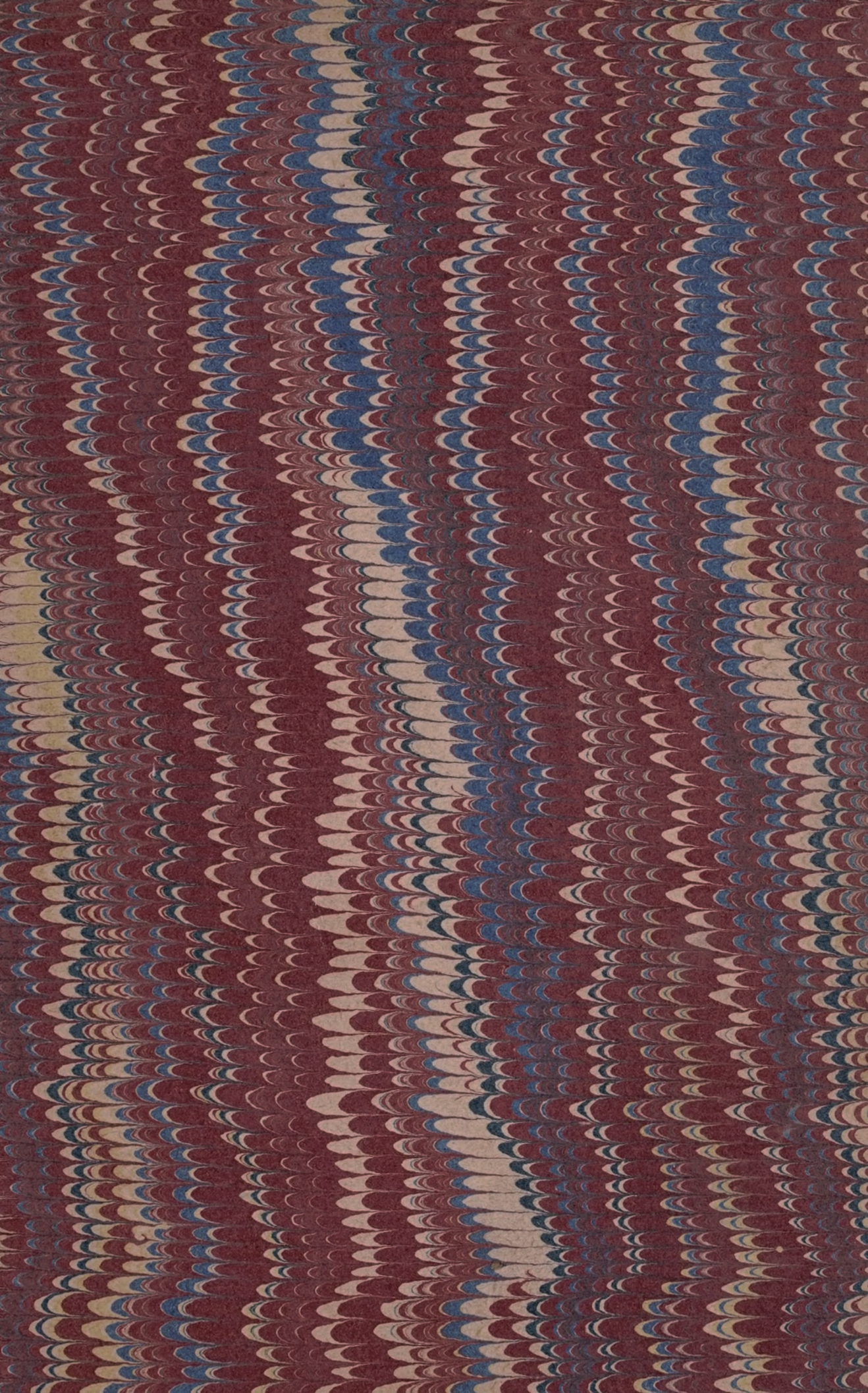
FT MEADE
GenColl

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.

Class. PZ3 Copyright No.

Shelf. B 841 N

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.





Published Quarterly

Price 25 Cents.

July 6, 1895.

NAN HAGGARD: THE HEIRESS OF DEAD HOPES MINE.

BY MRS. MARY E. BRYAN.



LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
COPYRIGHT
JUL 16 1895
CITY OF WASHINGTON
34001

LIBRARY OF AMERICAN AUTHORS

No. 63.

GEORGE MUNRO'S SONS PUBLISHERS

17 TO 27 VANDEWATER ST. NEW YORK.

Entered at the Post Office at New York at Second Class Rate.

Copyrighted by George Munro's Sons 1893 - By Subscription \$1.00 per Annum

The New York Fashion Bazar Book of the Toilet.

WITH HANDSOME LITHOGRAPHED COVER.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

This is a little book which we can recommend to every lady for the Preservation and Increase of Health and Beauty. It contains full directions for all the arts and mysteries of personal decoration, and for increasing the natural graces of form and expression. All the little affections of the skin, hair, eyes, and body, that detract from appearance and happiness, are made the subjects of precise and excellent recipes. Ladies are instructed how to reduce their weight without injury to health and without producing pallor and weakness. Nothing necessary to a complete toilet book of recipes and valuable advice and information has been overlooked in the compilation of this volume.

The New York Fashion Bazar Book of Etiquette.

WITH HANDSOME LITHOGRAPHED COVER.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

This book is a guide to good manners and the ways of fashionable society, a complete hand-book of behavior: containing all the polite observances of modern life; the Etiquette of engagements and marriages; the manners and training of children; the arts of conversation and polite letter-writing; invitations to dinners, evening parties and entertainments of all descriptions; table manners, etiquette of visits and public places; how to serve breakfasts, luncheons, dinners and teas; how to dress, travel, shop, and behave at hotels and watering-places. This book contains all that a lady or gentleman requires for correct behavior on all social occasions.

Model Letter-Writer and Lovers' Oracle.

WITH HANDSOME LITHOGRAPHED COVER.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

This book is a complete guide for both ladies and gentlemen in elegant and fashionable letter-writing: containing perfect examples of every form of correspondence, business letters, love letters, letters to relatives and friends, wedding and reception cards, invitations to entertainments, letters accepting and declining invitations, letters of introduction and recommendation, letters of condolence and duty, widows' and widowers' letters, love letters for all occasions, proposals of marriage, letters between betrothed lovers, letters of a young girl to her sweetheart, correspondence relating to household management, letters accompanying gifts, etc. Every form of letter used in affairs of the heart will be found in this little book. It contains simple and full directions for writing a good letter on all occasions. The latest forms used in the best society have been carefully followed. It is an excellent manual of reference for all forms of engraved cards and invitations.

The foregoing works are for sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent to any address, postage free, on receipt of price, by the publisher.

GEORGE MUNRO'S SONS, Munro's Publishing House,

(P. O. Box 2781.)

17 to 27 Vandewater St., New York.

BEECHAM'S PILLS

WHAT THEY ARE FOR

Biliousness	indigestion	sallow skin
dyspepsia	bad taste in the mouth	pimples
sick headache	foul breath	torpid liver
bilious headache	loss of appetite	depression of spirits

when these conditions are caused by constipation; and constipation is the most frequent cause of all of them.

One of the most important things for everybody to learn is that constipation causes more than half the sickness in the world; and it can all be prevented. Go by the book.

Write to B. F. Allen Company, 365 Canal Street, New York, for the little book on CONSTIPATION (its causes, consequences, and correction); sent free. Pills, 10c. and 25c., at all druggists. If you are not within reach of a druggist, the pills will be sent by mail, regular size, for 25 cents.

Annual sales more than 6,000,000 boxes.

THE NEW YORK **Fireside Companion**

\$3.00 PER YEAR.

The following popular authors write *exclusively*
for The New York Fireside Companion :

Laura Jean Libbey,
.....

Lucy Randall Comfort,
.....

Charles Garvice,
.....

Wenona Gilman,
.....

Mary E. Bryan,
.....

Dora Delmar,
.....

Halsey Page,
.....

Jean Corey,
.....

"Old Sleuth."
.....

Also a choice selection of Sketches, Poetry,
Humorous Matter, and Answers to Correspond-
ents on all subjects, will be found in each
number.

Price \$3.00 per year, or \$1.00 for four months. Send for
sample free. Address

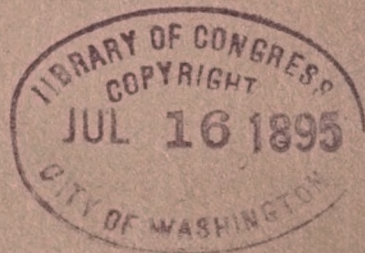
GEORGE MUNRO'S SONS,
(P. O. Box 2781.) 17 to 27 VANDEWATER STREET, NEW YORK.

NAN HAGGARD,

THE HEIRESS OF DEAD HOPES MINE.

BY

MRS. MARY E. BRYAN.



COPYRIGHT, 1888, BY GEORGE MUNRO.

NEW YORK:

GEORGE MUNRO'S SONS, PUBLISHERS,

17 TO 27 VANDEWATER STREET.

PZ 3
B841N

THE GREAT FAMILY MEDICINE.

HAMLIN'S WIZARD OIL.

**CURES ALL ACHES,
PAINS, SORENESS, SWELLING
AND INFLAMMATION**

FROM ANY CAUSE.

SOLD BY ALL DRUGGISTS.

PRICE 50 CENTS AND \$1.00 PER BOTTLE.

HAMLIN'S BLOOD AND LIVER PILLS

**FOR HEADACHE,
INDIGESTION,
CONSTIPATION,
ETC.**

**25 CENTS
PER BOTTLE.**

**MAN'F'D
ONLY
BY**

**HAMLIN'S
WIZARD
OIL CO.,
CHICAGO.**

HAMLIN'S COUGH BALSAM

**BEST
REMEDY FOR
COUGHS AND
HOARSENESS.**

**50 CENTS
PER BOTTLE.**

NAN HAGGARD.

CHAPTER I.

THE BURNING HOUSE.—CHILD AND FATHER.—WHY DID HE NOT SAVE HIS WIFE?

PAST midnight on a stormy September night. A wild wind was abroad, tossing the tops of the pines and lashing the boughs of the creaking old oaks around Widow Calvert's cottage.

The widow was lying in her bed with wide-open eyes. Anxiety kept her awake. What if a tree should blow down upon Brindle and her new calf in the pasture shed, or the rain should fall in such a flood as would make the creek rise and carry away the dam of the neighborhood mill?

Presently she started up and ran to the window. A glare of light, broader and more continuous than the lightning, illumined the sky in the north. She had seen it from her bed; she saw it more plainly now. She watched it a moment; it grew broader—brighter. She cried out to her daughter, sleeping in another bed in the room:

“Rachel! Rachel! wake up! Mr. Haggard's house on the hill is afire!”

She snatched a great ox-horn that hung by a cord from the wall, and hurrying out on the porch, blew it long and loud—a signal to rouse the neighbors.

The wild, wail-like peal was heard by the keen ears of the hounds on two adjoining farms. They set up an answering outcry of barks and howls that speedily roused their owners, and brought them out where they could see

the glare of the burning house—the new cottage built for his pretty wife by Haggard, the young Englishman who had bought the gold-lands on Haggard Creek and opened a mine.

By the time the active Widow Calvert, hastily dressed, had reached the scene of the fire, out of breath, and followed by her daughter Rachel, others were on the way and coming up.

It was too late to subdue the fire. The cottage was wrapped in flames, fanned to fury by the wind. Where were the occupants? Where were Mrs. Haggard and her child? Had they been alone in the house? No; her husband had come back the day before from England, where he had been for three months past.

Where were they? The group collected before the blazing house looked anxiously around. They called. There was a faint, childish cry in answer; and, guided by the sound, they found Mr. Haggard, sitting propped against the trunk of a tree a little distance from the house, with his little girl clinging to him—so frightened she shrunk away trembling from the kindly hands that touched her.

The man seemed to be in a state of unconsciousness. His eyes were open, but they had no intelligence. He stared at them in a bewildered way when they spoke to him. They raised him to his feet. He could not walk. He staggered in a blind way like one intoxicated or hurt in the head.

But he showed no sign of any hurt in the necessarily hurried examination they made of his person.

Where was his wife—the lovely young creature who had won the hearts of all the neighborhood by her beauty and sweetness?

It was in vain to ask the husband. He evidently did not comprehend a word or recognize a face among those that pressed about him with eager questions.

They turned to the child. She had let herself be taken

in the arms of Mrs. Calvert, and with her face pressed against the widow's motherly bosom, she was sobbing in a silent, spasmodic way.

She was in her little white night-gown only, her pretty brown curls blowing in the wind.

"Tell us, dearie, where your mamma is? We want to find her and bring her to you," coaxed the widow, as she took up the folds of her stuff gown and wrapped the child in it.

The little one raised her head.

"Oh, find her, and bring her to me, please!" she pleaded.

"But where is she, baby? Don't you know?"

"No, I don't know," she said, with quivering lips. "Don't let her burn up. Get my mamma out of the fire. Please do!"

"Is she in the burning house?"

The child repeated her plaintive "I don't know."

"How came *you* here? Who brought you? Was it your father?"

"Oh, I don't know. I was in my little bed asleep. I heard somebody scream. It sounded like my mamma. I heard it one more time. I called out loud to her and papa, and started to get up. Then somebody ran in and caught me up and wrapped me all in a blanket and brought me out here. My head was all wrapped up in the blanket. I couldn't see who it was had me. I unwrapped myself; then I saw the big fire up at the window. I ran all about before I saw papa sittin' here under the tree. I asked him where mamma was, but he wouldn't mind what I said. He wouldn't talk. I think he's sick. That's all I know."

She told this story in fragments as it was drawn from her by questions. Evidently it was all she knew.

The neighbors looked at one another in bewilderment. Had Haggard left his wife to be burned up in the house?

If not, where was she? What was the matter with him? Had he received an injury in trying to save his family, or had some one else saved the child, and the shock of seeing his house burning, with his wife inside, been too much for his brain, already unnerved by business troubles? Who could tell? And if another had saved the child, where was that other?

Meantime, the flood-gates of the black clouds overhead had opened with crashing thunders, and the rain poured down in torrents. The people took shelter in the miners' huts close by—vacant now, for the men formerly employed in the Haggard mine had gone elsewhere to find employment. There had been no work done in the mines for three months. Operations had been suspended for want of money and because further work seemed useless. The mine had failed to hold out its rich promise. The vein had suddenly given out. Was it exhausted or lost? Its failure was the ruin of its owner—the handsome, enterprising young Englishman who had bought the gold-lands on the creek a few years before. He had used his own fortune and borrowed money from his friends in England to open the mine and carry on the operations. The yield at first had far exceeded his hopes. He thought he had an Eldorado. He built a pretty Swiss cottage on a picturesque hill near the mines, and brought out his wife and child from England. Scarcely were they established in their new home when calamity came. The gold vein was lost. Haggard did not know what to do. He felt sure there was no lack of ability in his superintendent. Stephen Brent was an experienced California miner, a man who had made a fortune once in mining operations in the West, but had lost it in unfortunate speculations. No; he felt sure Brent was doing his best. He had perfect trust in his quiet, taciturn superintendent.

Brent was his friend and his prospective business partner rather than his employé. He was a frequent and welcome

guest at his home, and it had been in Brent's charge that he left his young wife and child when he went to England three months ago for the purpose of selling all his estates there, and repaying the friends who had lent him money, and also, if possible, of getting means to recommence a search for the lost gold vein.

The superintendent had not been seen about the burning house. Two men went to seek him at his temporary bachelor's home—a little cottage close to the mine—but he was not there. His housekeeper said he had been absent three days in the city—forty miles away. He would not be back until next day.

CHAPTER II.

WHO WAS THE CRIMINAL?

HAGGARD had been carried almost bodily into a miner's hut out of the storm. He fell upon the floor in a heap, and lay there. His eyes were open, but they were vacant and mindless. He took no note of anything.

The storm raged for more than an hour. The rain fell in torrents. They could see it drowning out the flames of the half-burned house. The men and the two women watched the wild downpour, and uttered futile conjectures about what had become of the wife of the unconscious man on the floor, and the child who had sobbed herself to sleep on the widow's lap.

At last the rain abated. The storm was over; the moon came out through rugged clouds and lighted the still smoking wreck of Haggard's home. The flames had been extinguished before the lower story of the house had been consumed. As soon as it was possible, search was made for the body of Mrs. Haggard. It was found near the unconsumed stairs, and dragged from among the *débris*—a charred and blackened form horrible for those to look

upon who had seen her in her living shape of grace and blooming beauty.

So she had really perished in the flames! Why had she not escaped? Why had not her husband saved her as well as the child? What had prevented her from saving herself? Was it terror? Could she have been asleep and waked bewildered and stifled by smoke?

The question why she had not escaped from the burning house was possibly answered by a circumstance that deepened the horror of the tragedy. It was found that the skull of the unfortunate victim was deeply indented—fractured without a doubt. Was it by a fall or a blow?

Had she then been murdered—and by whom? It was too horrible and too absurd to conjecture that her husband had killed her and then set fire to the house to hide his crime. He was devotedly attached to her—and yet—who else could have done the deed? Who? Why, some enemy, some disaffected ex-workman of the mines, or some desperate tramp who thought the lady was alone, not knowing of her husband's return, but aware that her protector—Brent, had gone to the city. She had kept no servant in the house except an old colored man and his wife, who slept in the basement. They, as the neighbors knew, were five miles away this Saturday night, attending a colored camp meeting, where the old negro was one of the leading preachers. This, too, had no doubt been known to the tramp, though he had not perhaps been aware of Mr. Haggard's return.

In the struggle between the man of the house and the midnight desperado, Haggard had been stunned and left for dead. The wretch had then killed Mrs. Haggard and fired the house. Who had saved the child? The father, probably. He had revived sufficiently to rescue the little girl, and had then collapsed through the internal injuries he had received.

This was the drift of conjecture among a group of neigh-

bors, now largely re-enforced, who were collected about the smoking ruins in the gray light of early morning. Others held the theory that the fire alone had caused the calamity. The inmates of the cottage had been awakened from sleep by the roaring of the flames. The father had caught up his child, and the mother following, blinded and stifled by smoke, had fallen, probably down-stairs, and received an injury in the head that caused her death.

The shock had paralyzed her husband's reason.

Others still whispered among themselves the darker version of the midnight tragedy.

Haggard had come home with his brain unsettled by his financial troubles. In a fit of madness or, perhaps, of jealous anger against his wife, he had killed her, and then, with the instinctive cunning of the maniac, had set fire to the house.

Brent, who came about ten o'clock, while the inquest was being held, scoffed at this solution of the mystery. He was sure Haggard would never have laid a hurtful finger on his wife, crazy or sane—he loved her too well.

Brent was dreadfully shocked and agitated. Though he was a strongly built giant of a man, with an eye full of fiery power and restless energy, he trembled when they led him to the blackened remains of his friend's beautiful wife. He would not look at her.

He turned quickly away. A question was put to him—he could not speak in reply to it; the muscles about his mouth were jerking, as could be seen by the movement of his thick mustache.

He was pressed to say what he believed to be the most reasonable conjecture concerning the mysterious affair.

He only shook his head. At last he said:

“It is strange. It passes my comprehension.”

Then he sunk his head on his hands again and looked like one stricken.

"Brent takes it hard," said a by-stander. "He thought a lot of both of them."

"The wife in particular," spoke up the high treble voice of Miss Brooks, the gossip of the neighborhood. The significance in her tone was understood by those around him.

Haggard was still in the miner's cabin. He seemed to become more paralyzed every moment. The neighborhood physician had examined him, and reported that he found no injury. There might be an internal hurt, but his opinion was that the young Englishman had suffered a paralyzing shock of his already overstrained brain upon realizing that his wife was dead and seeing his home in flames before him. He believed the attack would be fatal. The coma would presently react into brain fever and delirium.

"We will see if medical skill can not help him," said Stephen Brent, rousing from his silent and motionless attitude. "I will take him right away to the city. My buggy is here. I'll get him to the station in time for the noon train."

He shook off the stunned feeling that had seemed to make him inert, and showed his usual quiet though taciturn energy in getting his stricken friend to the station.

Before the burial of his wife had taken place, the unconscious husband was being borne away to seek more skillful aid than this country neighborhood afforded.

"He'll never come back," uttered the country doctor, piqued at losing a case. "The journey will destroy his one small chance of recovery. He'll be a dead man within a week. He'll never come to his reason enough to tell how last night's work came about."

The prediction was verified, in part, ten days later by the return of Brent alone to the neighborhood. He told of Haggard's death. He had died of brain fever produced by a mental shock. He had, however, recovered consciousness a few hours before his death. He would tell nothing

about the fire or the cause of his wife's death; but he was conscious that his own end was at hand, and he had signified his wish to leave his child in Brent's charge, with the remnant of his shattered fortune in trust for her. A paper to this effect had been drawn up, and he had affixed his name to it with a last effort of his fast-expiring strength.

The only heritage of the child was the mine with the lost gold vein, and the thousand acres of wild land that lay around it.

The child had been taken away by the Widow Calvert to her own home after the funeral of the mother. No more pitiful sight had ever been seen in that neighborhood than the desolate little creature presented on the dismal afternoon when her mother was buried in the dreary country grave-yard. Still in her night-gown—her only garment—and wrapped in the widow's black cloak, with its hood drawn over her brown curls, her little white face looked out with a bewildered, frightened wistfulness in its wide, dark eyes and tremulous mouth. She did not comprehend the extent of her desolation. She had seen her mother's blackened corpse drawn from the ruins of her home and seen her father look at it with the indifference of unconsciousness. But she could not understand that the black, shapeless form was her beautiful young mother—that she would soon be fatherless, as she was motherless, in a strange land, without kindred or fortune. She shivered with a vague horror, and clung to the kind-hearted widow.

What was to be done with her? The neighbors were poor, and had their share of olive branches. None of them felt able to burden themselves with another child.

The widow stood in fear of Rachel's tongue, but she could not abandon the little one who seemed to look upon her as her only friend. She put the child before her on the bony brown mare, and took her with her to her little home on the hill-side. Miss Rachel was wroth.

“You'll have that puny brat on your hands for good,”

she declared. "She'll always be twice the trouble she's worth. They're never any account to work—the children of that sort of stuck-up people."

A week later Stephen Brent rode up to the Calvert cottage and spoke to the widow at the gate. The child's father was dead, he said. He had left a will, making him her guardian and executor of the estate, such as it was.

"I've no real home to take her to, Mrs. Calvert," he said, "and nobody to look after her. I wish you would keep her until I can see what else may be done for her. I'll pay you for her board every quarter. You can teach her to work and help you about the house."

"I'll keep her," the widow agreed, after a short hesitation. "Rachel will be mad, but I'll tell her she may have the board-money; maybe that will pacify her. I hate to give the dear little thing up, that's the truth. She takes hold of a body's heart with her pitiful little ways; and she 'pears to take to me. Wouldn't you like to see her? She's dreadful down-hearted still, grievin' after her mar and par. You'll seem like a friend to her, she's seen you at her home so much. I'll fetch her out."

"No, no; not now. I can't see her now. I haven't time," he exclaimed, hastily. "I'm on my way to the mines. I want to have the machinery appraised. Everything will have to be sold to pay Haggard's debts. I must do the best I can to save something for the child."

"That's right. It's due for old friendship's sake. Poor man! He seemed such a nice man, too. And such a lovely little critter as his wife was. My! but it was a dreadful night's work that. You ain't found out anything about how it was done, or who was at the bottom of it?"

"No, it's all dark. It was the work of tramps, probably; but it will never be known for a certainty."

"Yes, it will; wickedness always comes to light soon or late. That night's black work is sure to be found out, mark my words."

“Let us hope you may be a true prophet,” Brent said cutting the colloquy short by wheeling his horse’s head.

With a brief good-morning he rode away in the direction of the mines.

The widow looked after him, shaking her head, as she said to herself:

“He wouldn’t see the child. The little thing is the born image of her mother, and I s’pose he couldn’t stand to see her. Susan Brooks will have it he thought more of Haggard’s wife—poor, pretty creetur!—than he’d any right to; but law sakes, Susan Brooks is always fermentin’ scandals in them shallow brains of hern.”

A few weeks later it was published in the county paper that the Haggard lands would be sold by the administrator, at public auction, and it was rumored that Brent would buy them in, as he had said the estate was greatly in debt to him for unpaid services in superintending the mine. Before the sale took place, however, Dead Hopes Mine was the scene of another tragedy. One night, just at the break of day, a loud crash like a burst of thunder and a sudden rattling of the window-glass startled those living nearest the mines from their beds, and sent them to the doors and windows, only to see a clear sky faintly streaked with the rosy hue of breaking day.

The mystery was solved by old Sophy, Brent’s black housekeeper, who ran breathless to the nearest neighbor’s, crying out that her master had been killed by an explosion at the mine. She told that of late he often walked in his sleep, going sometimes to the mine, and sometimes to the ruins of the half-burned house of the Haggards. To-night he had got up from his bed, after midnight, and gone out. He stayed so long her mind misgave her, and she dressed and went to the mine herself. She was nearly there when the explosion took place. She was thrown flat on her back, and as soon as she could get up she went on. She soon

came upon her master lying lifeless among loose earth and fragments of rock.

She told the story to the neighbors as they hurried to the scene of the disaster.

"It was a judgment on him. I knowed it would come; I told him it would!" she cried, wringing her hands.

"A judgment for what? What had he done to be punished for?" was asked her.

But she was silent. As to the cause of the explosion she could tell nothing; but one of the men—a former workman in the mine—recalled that they had bored a new drill for the purpose of blasting just before work on the mine was discontinued. It had never been charged. Brent had ordered otherwise. In his sleep-walking state he must have charged it with powder, set the fuse and ignited it, but failed to get beyond reach of hurt before the explosion took place.

He was not dead, however. He was unconscious when they picked him up out of the *débris*, but he came to his senses. His leg was broken by a fragment of stone, and he had received so terrible a nervous shock that for awhile it was thought would prove fatal. He rallied, after a time, but he never fully recovered from the hurt and the shock. Those who saw him afterward reported that he had a strange, anxious look—that he never smiled, and that his hand shook as though with palsy. He seemed to have a horror of Dead Hopes Mine, for he never returned to it. The sale of the property did not take place. The lands remained waste and uncleared, except for small patches about the dwellings of one or two squatters who found shelter in the abandoned miners' huts.

Some of the land was let at low prices for pasture and for the wood and water privileges upon it, but most of it remained waste. All the business connected with its letting was done through an agent. Brent himself had no more to do with it. Report said that he had gone to the

North-west, and had there invested in mining lands and made a large fortune.

Lately the country people heard of his return to the city, accompanied by a beautiful woman, whom he had married not long before.

“He looks powerful old and broken,” said the farmer who brought the news, “alongside his dashing wife, though she was a widow, they say, with a grown son. She’s a beauty, though, and no mistake.”

But he did not come to see nor did he write to his youthful ward—the orphan heiress of Dead Hopes Mine.

The abandoned mine was now a desolate-looking spot. The pits had become reservoirs of stagnant rain-water. Nettles and briars overhung them. Wild vines clambered over the rotting buildings, and grass grew before the doors of the deserted miners’ cabins. Weeds and vines and friendly moss hid the black scars of the half-burned Haggard cottage. Its chimney still stood upright, and part of the staircase was there, muffled in Virginia creeper.

On wild, stormy nights, when the lightning played about the ruins, it was said that the form of the murdered Anabel Haggard was seen standing at the head of that ruined staircase, in her white night-robe.

“Her ghost will walk until her murderer is found and punished,” said the people.

But the crime of that night of fire and blood remained still a mystery. The widow’s prophecy that light would be thrown upon it had not yet come to pass.

The child-heiress of Dead Hopes Mine was still an inmate of Widow Calvert’s cottage. Brent sent quarterly enough money to pay for her board and a few cheap clothes. The widow taught her to read the Bible and Baxter’s “Saints’ Rest,” and the “Pictorial History of the World.” This comprised her library. She knew all the psalms by heart, and nearly everything in the “Pictorial History.” She had no companions of her own age. The

widow and her old-maid daughter stayed at home and worked hard. The child learned early to help them in the garden and the dairy, also to knit and spin. She was fond of her foster-mother, and grieved for her heart-brokenly when she died. This was when Nan was twelve years old. Anabel had been her name—the same as her mother's—but Miss Rachel said it was “too fine for a child as had nothin’—not even any kinnery”—and so she was called Nan.

Nan's life was harder after the death of her good old friend. Miss Rachel had no softness in her composition, and no sympathy with the poetical, sensitive feelings of the little English waif. She put hard tasks on the child; she scolded and found fault with her; called her queer and idle and mooning; forbid her to have pets, and ruthlessly burned the books—old, battered novels—that were lent to the girl by a friend she had lately been so fortunate as to find. But through the instrumentality of this friend—an old lady living on a dilapidated estate close by—Nan had the benefit of a little schooling from the kind-hearted but not very competent country teacher. Mrs. De Lacy spoke to him about Nan, and he saw the child, and was touched by her desolate condition.

“She must have some instruction,” he said. “It's a shame to have her grow up without it—and she so bright, and the child of gentlefolks.”

“What's the good of her gentle blood, I'd like to know?” snapped Miss Rachel. “It don't put bread in her mouth nor clothes on her back. She's got no fortune to look to, and there's no call to be putting high notions in her head. She'll have to work for her living, mortally as she hates to do drudgery.”

“Her schooling sha'n't cost her a cent, and you must spare her from her work to come to school half the year at least. It is your duty, Rachel.”

Miss Rachel muttered something about not thanking

anybody to come and tell her what her duty was; but the quiet voice and steady eyes of Solomon Slow silenced her opposition.

CHAPTER III.

SWEET SIXTEEN.—NAN GETS A BIRTHDAY-PRESENT THAT BRINGS A STORM UPON HER HEAD.

It wanted an hour to sunset. Nan was coming from school along the wood's path where the shadows lay long and cool.

Her gingham sun-bonnet was pushed back from her head, her tin dinner-bucket swung from her hand, as she walked beside her teacher—Solomon Slow.

Professor Slow, the country folks called him. He too carried his dinner-bucket; also his "Davies' Arithmetic" and his slate. It was his habit to keep ahead of his more advanced pupils by working out at night the sums he gave them for the next day's lesson.

Mr. Slow, a shy, odd old bachelor, lived with his mother in the old red house half a mile beyond Miss Rachel Calvert's home.

As they came in sight of the lowly roof that sheltered Nan, a fine young dog came bounding down the road to meet them. He welcomed Nan boisterously by jumping up against her and wagging his bushy tail. Then he took the handle of her lunch-basket between his teeth and trotted on ahead.

He did this every afternoon, rewarded on reaching the gate by receiving the scraps left from Nan's lunch, usually not very plentiful; for Nan had a healthy appetite, and "Miss Rachel is an equinomical provider," the professor was wont to say, as he added the fragments from his own bucket to Bruin's feast.

He called it *equinomical*, and he spelled it so. He had struggled with his orthography, for his education was lim-

ited. His slender pupil trudging there beside him knew more than he did, though she was unaware of her superiority.

There was never a human being more devoid of self-consciousness than Nan. Bruin had come up to them just as they reached the lower fence of the rambling old orchard. A branch of hoary apple-tree overhung the road. Nan picked a yellow apple that shone through the leaves and tendered it to Mr. Slow.

"Name it," he said, looking admiringly at her face with the sunset flush upon it.

"Name it?" she repeated, in surprise.

"Yes; isn't that what the girls do when they give an apple?"

"Oh, they name it for the sweetheart of the girl they give it to, but I thought—"

"You thought I was too old."

"Not that; I never thought about that, but it would seem nonsense to you—naming for sweethearts—it does to me."

"You never had a sweetheart, Nan?"

"No, indeed. I don't know any boys but Sam Reed and Dick Patterson. They are not nice. They laugh so loud and chew tobacco."

"Nan," said the professor, abruptly, as he turned the apple over in his hand, and glanced from it to the girl, "didn't I hear you say last week that to-day would be your birthday?"

"Yes; I'm sixteen to-day. I had forgotten about it."

"Sixteen—almost a young lady."

"Am I?"

She looked down at herself with a quick sense of the inappropriateness of the term to the wearer of an up-to-the-knees out-grown frock, home-knit stockings and high-necked apron.

"You had forgotten about your birthday? Was there

nobody to remind you of it? Has nobody given you a birthday-present?"

"Nobody at all. Who should give me a present? I never had one in my life."

Who, indeed, was to make gifts to Nan Haggard, who had no kith or kin and no friend but old Mrs. De Lacy, who was too poor to give presents?

At school she was one apart. She was made to feel that she was not like other girls—she a "furriner," as they called her, with the shadow of a tragedy on her child-life, a dependent on old Miss Rachel whom nobody liked. She was quoted a splendid hand to help one with a composition or a parsing lesson, but she was queer. She was given to consorting with children younger than herself, going gyp-sying with them down the creek, wading for mussel shells and climbing trees just to peep into birds' nests, or get a cluster of vine blossoms; or else poring over old books all recess; while the other girls talked of their sweethearts or their new clothes, she, sitting off by herself in the low branches of a bushy pine-tree, read the old romances of brave knights and the fair stately ladies they worshiped and fought for. She made for herself a little dream world, in which these brave and beautiful personages figured. They were more real to her than the people about her.

For Nan had grown up a shy, solitary child, sensitive to the fact that the shadow of that early tragedy fell over her, isolating her from the little world of commonplace people about her.

She often caught meaning glances directed to her, and overheard whispers referring to the calamity that had made her an orphan. She gathered enough to know that her father was believed to have been possessed by some mad or evil spirit, and that a touch of it might rest upon her—to break out suddenly into something dreadful.

"She's an awful queer sort of girl," was what she often heard. It made her draw yet more closely within herself.

The professor, still fingering the apple, looked as though struggling to get something out. It came at last.

"I remembered your birthday, Nan. I have a little present for you, if you will accept it."

He drew it out of his pocket—a pretty little blue and gold volume—and gave it to her.

"Oh, it is Praed's poems—just what I wanted! Mrs. De Lacy knows one of them by heart."

She pushed the sun-bonnet back on her neck, and eagerly turned the pages of the little book.

"How pretty it is! And did you get it just for me? Did you think that much of me?"

"I think more of you than any pupil in my school, Nan. I—"

A rustling among the thick apple-boughs inside the orchard fence checked his speech. Besides, he saw that Nan was too much absorbed in her book to appreciate his eloquence.

They walked slowly into the house, standing at the gate a moment to give Bruin his reward for carrying the bucket.

The sunset was bright on Nan's bare head. The breeze blew her hair into a hundred little plummy curls, her cheeks were softly flushed, her long lashes rested darkly upon their delicate pink cheeks as she stooped to pat the dog. The professor thought it was a pretty sight, and he was struggling with an unwonted compliment when a shrill voice from the piazza called out:

"Nan, come straight in and get to strainin' that milk. What do you mean a-foolin' away your time, dwardlin' along as if you had nothin' to do and was worth a fortune!"

It was Miss Rachel's voice. She stood in the porch eying the two loiterers at the gate with superior scorn. The professor colored red, and with a hasty bow walked on. Nan went into the house, closing the book with a

sigh, and prepared to strain the milk and set the table for supper.

Miss Rachel, kneading the dough for biscuit at the table near her, vented her ill humor in further scolding.

“A full half hour behind your time, as usual, along a-dwardling on the way, gabbling and flirting at the fence corners.”

“Flirting?” exclaimed Nan, looking up from the milk-pan. “What do you mean, Miss Rachel?”

“Oh, you know very well, Miss Innocence. I heard it all. I was behind the apple-tree pickin’ raspberries. You was too much taken up to see me. I heard all that stuff about namin’ apples and sweethearts. I wanted to box your ears, and his too.”

She gave a vicious dab at the dough as though it were the ears in question.

“‘There’s no fool like an old fool,’ but it’s flirty young upstarts that set ’em to makin’ fools of themselves. I heard your palaverin’. ‘Professor, did you get that beautiful book for me? There’s nobody to give me presents.’ Who’s give you the bread you’ve eat, and the clothes you’ve wore the last two years, I’d like to know? What’s a triflin’ book to that? Some trash like the books that old De Lacy crank gives you, to stuff your head with love nonsense before you are knee-high to a goose. If that book he giv’ you is like I think it is, a mess about love and fine doin’s above your station, I’ll put it in the stove to cook these here biscuit with—that’s what I’ll do. Hand it here—let me look at it.”

She wrung her hands out of the dough, wiped them on her apron, and reached out to get the book where it lay on the end of Nan’s milking-table. The girl gave a spring and caught of the volume.

“You sha’n’t burn it!” she cried. “You sha’n’t burn the only present I ever had in my life.”

"I'll burn it, if I see a word of love nonsense in it. Your head's stuffed with that enough already."

Of course there was love in it. Who ever heard of poems without love in them—soul of all poetry? Nan had read an exquisite little love lyric as she walked from the orchard to the gate. She remembered it and clutched the book as tightly as she could. Miss Rachel did her best to wrench it from her.

In the struggle a milk-pan was upset and a saucer broken. Miss Rachel loosed her hold on the book to slap Nan again and again, till the girl's pale cheeks were aflame and the tears of pain stood in her eyes. Then she pushed her upstairs, and shut her into a little back shed-room, locking the door.

Nan, left alone, clinched her hands and sobbed in a stormy passion of resentment for awhile. Then she cooled down and took her seat in the low window opening on the shed roof.

Her cat came walking up the sloping roof, hunting for her, climbed into her lap, and rubbing herself against her mistress, purred her sympathy.

Nan hugged her dumb friend in her arms, and began to cry again, more softly, talking all the while to her dumb friend.

"Oh, Kitty! was there ever such a miserable girl as I am in the world? I wish I were dead and couldn't feel any more. I've got to be a slave all my life to a cross old woman that won't be pleased no matter what I do. I have no peace of my life. I've got no father, no mother, no friends, only you, my Kitty, and Bruin. Nobody but you," she went on, making a half-sobbing refrain of the words till her tears once more ceased, and she went on:

"Yes; I have got a friend. I have two good friends—Mr. Slow and Mrs. De Lady. How good and funny Mrs. De Lacy is! I have had some nice times with her, up in her lumber-room with that barrel of old books. I wish I

could see her to-night. I'd ask her what I must do. I can't, I won't stay here all my life; I'll run away and join the gypsies, or do something. Mrs. De Lacy might tell me what? Or she could write to Mr. Brent and find out about him. Is he dead, I wonder? Miss Rachel says he hasn't sent any money for me in two years, and I'm here eating the bread of dependence. Oh! such bitter bread as it is! I wish I could see Mrs. De Lacy. If I could get out of here I'd go to see her this pretty moonlight night. It would be just a nice run through the woods and across the field. Why, I *can* get out of here just as easy as not. I can slide down this shed and swing myself to the ground by a limb of the mulberry-tree. I'll do it, too, and I'll go by the guinea's nest—it's *my* guinea, old Mrs. Slow gave her to me—and carry my apron full of eggs to Mrs. De Lacy. She'll be glad to get them. Come, Kitty; now for a slide."

She gathered her short frock close about her, and with Kitty in her lap she slid down the shed, caught a limb of the tough mulberry-tree, and swung herself to the ground.

She sped away across the field, followed by Kitty leaping after her through the grass like a rabbit.

CHAPTER IV.

A VISIT BY MOONLIGHT.—AN UNEXPECTED ARRIVAL.

MRS. DE LACY'S old house looked ghostly in the moonlight as Nan pushed open the big gate that sagged and grated on its one rusty hinge.

She went up the weedy, grassy walk that had once been shining with white gravel. The untrimmed trees met overhead, and in one of them a screech-owl was uttering his dismal wail.

A savage watch-dog flew at the intruder with a fierce bark which changed to a whimper of welcome the minute he saw it was Nan. He sniffed in a friendly way at her

outstretched hand, and only wagged his tail contemptuously at Kitty's elevated back.

The basement, built of brick and crumbling plaster, was covered with ivy. Through its arches came the sound of a fiddle in a back room, played by Uncle Mose, who, with his wife, Aunt Milly, and their boy Jake were now the only slaves remaining to the mistress of the once proud domain. They worked her garden and corn patch. The remainder of her worn-out land was rented to tenants on shares, her share being just enough to keep her and her few retainers, the three negroes, a pair of old horses, blooded, but battered, that had drawn her coach in the days when she rode in it beside her handsome, courtly husband.

The judge looked and felt like a prince. He dispensed, too, a princely hospitality, lived up to his income, and beyond it in his later years, and dying suddenly, left security debts and mortgages that swept the large "Quarter" clear of slave tenants. His widow had paid every debt, but it left her a pauper.

Nan bounded up the broad steps and made her way to Mrs. De Lacy's room. The old lady was sitting at a small table eating her frugal supper by the light of a tallow candle and the moon that came through a patched real lace curtain. The supper consisted of sugared blackberries in a silver dish, bread and butter, and tea in a cup of delicate china. These, together with an additional cup and saucer, two silver forks and spoons and a pair of silver sugar-tongs, were relics left from the fine table service over which this grand dame used to preside in better days.

She looked the grand dame still—with her fine pale skin, black eyes and dark brows and snow-white hair in puffs above her forehead. She always dressed for her simple and solitary evening meal. She put on her much-worn black Turkish satin, with the carefully mended ruffles of real lace at throat and wrists. She spread the small

table with a damask-cloth, and laid a delicate napkin beside her plate.

“Why, Nan Haggard, is that you?” she exclaimed, as the girl entered out of breath. “What do you mean by coming down like a wolf in the fold upon a quiet old sheep like me? Have you had your supper? Why child,” she went on as Nan came within the circle of the candle illumination, “you have been crying! What is the matter?”

“Nothing; only Miss Rachel abused me and slapped me and locked me up because I thanked the professor for giving me a book on my birthday. And I can’t live with her any more. She hates me worse every day, and she begrudges what I eat and wear. I won’t be dependent on her. I must earn my own living, but I don’t know where to go or what to do. I’m so miserable. There’s nobody to care what becomes of me. I think I’d better die, and be out of the way.”

Sobbing stormily, Nan threw herself down by Mrs. De Lacy and buried her face in the folds of the well-preserved satin.

The dear old lady let the girl have her cry out. She only smoothed her tumbled curls with her delicate wrinkled hand and patted her shoulder.

When the tempest of sobs had passed, she said gently:

“Try not to look at the dark side, Nan. That is the fault of young eyes. They see all the gloom—all the difficulties. Now I see plenty of bright possibilities ahead for little Nan Haggard. She is just sixteen to-day. She has a good heart and a bright head. She isn’t one of the golden-haired angels the novel-writers picture, but she has plenty of good looks, and an amiable nature, with just a wholesome spice of temper. The world is wide. There is room for you in it, Nan, outside Miss Rachel’s cottage. You can’t get along with her. Nobody ever did. She is envious and ill-tempered. I can explain her outburst this evening. She was jealous of you.”

“Of me—Mrs. De Lacy!”

“Yes; of the professor’s liking for you. They were engaged when they were young. Her bitter temper broke up the relation, but she still cherishes a kind of dog-in-the-manger regard for him. She refuses to give up her will to him or any man, but she gets furious if he shows a liking for any other female. He is afraid of her—this is why he has never married. His little act of kindness to you to-day aroused her jealousy.”

“She never liked me. She will hate me after this. I can’t take my bread from her grudging hand a day longer.”

“You ought not to stay with her; but you are not dependent on her. Nan Haggard, you are not dependent on anybody. You have property enough to support you.”

“I, Mrs. De Lacy? What have I? A few hundred acres of rocky land! Miss Rachel says it is not worth the taxes paid on it.”

“It isn’t, eh? Where does she pasture her sheep and cows? On Haggard Range. Where does she get the timber she sells to the saw-mills? From Haggard’s Hummock. I suppose Brent permits her to do this in return for your board. It is enough board you pay, I should say. Where is your guardian? Do you never hear from him?”

“Never. I have never seen him since I was a little child. We have not heard from his agent in two years. Miss Rachel says he hasn’t sent any money to pay for my schooling.”

“A pretty guardian he is. Why doesn’t he come down here and see to your interests, do something with your property, clear the land, repair the house?”

“What, Mrs. De Lacy, that half-burned ruin? Who would live there? They all say it is haunted. Seeley declares she saw my mother’s spirit all in white coming down the old rotten stairs. I don’t believe her. If mother’s spirit could come back it would come to me. She would

come and take me, as I have prayed her to so many times. Why was I spared that night? Why did not the fire or the murderer kill me too? It would have been better, so much better!"

"Hush, Nan, that is sinful. You were spared for some good purpose. I feel it. Your life, so rough now, will come smooth at last. There, I have told your fortune. I have moods of soothsaying sometimes. Turn round and thank me for it."

Nan turned from the window, a smile lighting her tears, and kissed the old lady's cheek.

"Good luck is not for me," she said.

"How do you know but the lost gold vein may be found some fine day, and Dead Hopes Mine be Bright Hopes again?"

"I dreamed so once," said the girl. "I thought I was looking down one of those black, yawning pits, where my poor father buried his hopes, and all of a sudden a glitter of gold dazzled my eyes. A fountain of gold seemed to spring from the bottom of the pit."

"It may prove a true dream. The mine has never been touched since that accident happened to Brent. They say he was never himself afterward—never had any of his old energy. But he has made money by speculating. He is counted rich, and lately he has married a handsome widow with one son, so I have heard. Of course she married him for his money. He is a forbidding-looking man. She was, no doubt, poor as a church mouse. I wish she may rouse him up to some action in your case. His neglect of you is shameful. I have determined to write to him myself and call him to a sense of his duty toward you. You deserve a better fate than to be brought up in this out-of-the-way place as Miss Rachel's drudge. I would not talk in this way to you if there was nothing better for you. Nan, I would not make you more discontented with your

lot if it was inevitable. But I know that things should change for you, and if—”

A loud noise below interrupted Mrs. De Lacy—the barking of a dog mingled with exclamations in African dialect.

“Unker Mose, Unker Mose, call off your dog!”

“It is Seeley’s voice,” Nan said. “Miss Rachel has sent her to find me and take me back. I have half a mind not to go.”

She stood with fluttering color listening as Seeley’s heavy shoes clattered up the steps, and her loud knock on the door was followed by her advent—a tall, loosely strung mulatto woman, with a round cocoa-nut head and a face alive with child-like good humor.

“Here you is,” she said, grinning when she caught sight of Nan. “Knowed I’d find you here, ’case my little dog track you. Persimmons kin track a human same as a ’possum. Miss Rachel done sent for you to come home, Nan, ’case—”

“Because she wants to lock me up again and take out her spite and ill-humor on me,” said the girl, with flashing eyes.

“Law sakes, child, no! She ain’t gwine to do dat now. She ain’t gwine to have no spit-fire ways, ’case your guardeen’s done come.”

“My guardian—Mr. Brent?”

“Not him zactly, but his wife—his new wife—mighty fine styly woman she is, and her son, a sumptious-looking young fellow, I tell you, wid de shiniest boots and curly mustashus. Dey ax about you powerful pleasant, and Miss Rachel telled ’em you’s gone to see your French teacher over de hill. Dey come to take you off wid ’em and send you to school or car’ you to travel, and dey fotch a big trunk full er presents for you.”

Nan’s eyes grew wide with surprise.

“What can this mean, I wonder? They seem to have

waked up quite suddenly to a knowledge of my existence," she said, laughing nervously, as she shook out her dress and smoothed her tumbled curls with trembling fingers.

"What does it mean, indeed?" echoed Mrs. De Lacy. "I don't understand this new departure. It is the work of the wife, I suppose. Is it through kindness of heart—a sense of justice or—what?"

"It can't be from any but a good motive. There's no benefit to come to them from bothering about me," Nan said. "I suppose I must hurry back and see what new fate is opening for me. Isn't it funny the change should come to-night, just as I was praying that a change would come into my life. So here it is. 'When things are at the worst, they mend,' says the old saw. Good-night, dearest Mrs. De Lacy. I'll run over and tell you everything in the morning and make your coffee for you."

"'When things are at the worst, they mend.' I wonder if this change will mend things for you, poor child," thought Mrs. De Lacy, as she stood at her window and watched in the moonlight Nan's little figure hurrying down the hill with quick, short steps, while the gaunt Seeley strode beside her.

"I don't at all understand this sudden movement on the part of a guardian that has seemed to forget his charge so long. There is some mystery behind it. I hope it portends no harm to Nan."

CHAPTER V.

MOTHER AND SON.

NAN and her dusky companion walked rapidly through the belt of woods that lay between Mrs. De Lacy's half-ruined old home and Miss Rachel's cottage.

They reached the gate, and then Nan saw, to her confusion, that the two grand strangers and Miss Rachel were out on the front porch. No chance now to slip into her

room and put on her best frock—a little brown merino gown made from the widow's Sunday dress. She must advance under fire of these strange, critical eyes, with the bright summer moonlight shining full upon her, in the short calico frock, the neck-apron, the clumsy shoes.

There was no help for it. They had heard the click of the gate; they had seen her. That young man standing on the top step, leaning against the pillar of the porch, was looking straight at her.

How stylish and handsome he looked to Nan's unsophisticated eyes! She felt her cheeks burning as she glanced at him, and saw that he was measuring her from head to foot as she came down the walk with the cat in her arms. She was sure his mustached lip curled disdainfully.

That contemptuous look gave her courage. She threw up her head and walked on resolutely but with burning cheeks.

Down the steps skipped a slender girlish figure all in light gray.

"Here she comes at last," cried a silvery voice. "Comes out of the woods like a nymph or a fairy. What a brave girl!"

Two plump arms were thrown about her, a pair of perfumed lips pressed her cheek.

"I'm glad to see you, my dear. I have heard your story from your guardian, my husband, and I feel deeply interested in you. This is my son. He has been so anxious to see you."

"My son" did not look as though he had been consumed by anxiety. He bowed his face wearing its indifferent expression.

"Are you Mrs. Brent, my guardian's wife?" Nan asked in amazement. It seemed impossible that this girlish, graceful lady could be the mother of the mustached and sulky-looking young man.

"Yes, I am Mrs. Brent. My son's name is Hoyt—

Edmund Hoyt. Such a tall fellow. You wouldn't suspect me of being his mother, would you? I assure you he quite looks down upon me."

She had a fairy-like figure and a shapely head covered with wavy yellow hair. Her small, regular features, peach-bloom skin and penciled brows made her seem to the eyes of Nan, who knew none of the mysteries of making-up, hardly twenty-five.

"Have you had dinner—supper you call it here?" she asked of Nan. "I am afraid you haven't. We came just as Miss Rachel was about to sit down to the table all alone. We enjoyed the hot biscuit and butter and jam. Miss Rachel is a splendid cook."

She glanced smilingly at Miss Rachel, who did not smile in return, but sat bolt upright in her chair, her face saying that she was not to be won over by any flattery on the part of a yellow-haired woman she didn't approve of.

Mrs. Brent did not seem to notice her ungraciousness. She talked on to Nan.

"Will you sit here in the moonlight, or shall we go to your room and have a little talk all to ourselves? I must ask you to pack your things to-night, or early in the morning. We must leave her quite early in order to catch the eight-o'clock train to the city. Mr. Brent will be looking for us to-morrow afternoon. You are to go home with us, you know—that is, if you want to. Don't you? Wouldn't you like to have a change—to see more of the world?"

"I would indeed," Nan answered, fervently.

"She's ready for anything new, you may be sure," interposed Miss Rachel. "She's ready to bounce off with the first one that beckons to her, with no thanks to the ones that's took care of her and waited on her all her life. There ain't no gratitude in some folks."

Nan wondered what she had to be grateful to Miss Rachel for. Mrs. Brent smiled understandingly, and gave

the girl's hand a little sympathetic squeeze as it lay in her soft palm.

"How good, how charming she is!" thought Nan. "She is like the lovely women I have read about."

She was emboldened to ask what she was to do in the city—was she to go to school?

"Oh, I think so," replied the lady. "Or you will have masters to come to the house, perhaps. Your guardian will decide this. He will do what he can for you. His health had been bad for years, and his business is a good deal involved, and demands close attention. It is because of his health and those business troubles that he has neglected you. He is sorry this happened so. He told me about you, and I was at once interested."

"It was you who brought me to his mind? I am sure I have you to thank for it," Nan said, with a grateful look.

She shook her head half in deprecation.

"A man has so many things to think about; he forgets a duty until it presses itself on him. So you will be ready to go in the morning? Come, now, and I'll help you pack your things."

"I—I don't think I'll need any help," Nan stammered. She had a swift vision of her "things"—these few shabby outgrown garments that she could put in a corner of the old hair trunk. She met Mrs. Brent's questioning eyes, and added, a little bitterly: "A short horse, they say, is soon curried. My horse is very short."

"Ah! you mean you have few clothes to pack. That is well enough. We can get everything new when we are in the city. I have brought some things I hope may fit you. Let us go in and try them on. They are in the front room here. You are to occupy that room to-night with me; and Edmund is to desecrate your little upstairs sanctum with his masculine presence. It is Miss Rachel's arrangement. Come."

She rose, holding Nan's hand, and went into the hall. Her son caught her arm as she passed him.

"I'll speak to you presently, Edmund," she said.

"I want to speak to you *now*," he retorted, ungraciously.

His mother stopped.

"Go in and light the lamp, my dear. I must see what this spoiled boy wants of me," she said to Nan.

Miss Rachel had gone inside. The mother and son were alone. Instantly her smiling, youthful look was gone. Her face in the moonlight looked hard and stern.

"Well?" she said, standing before her son.

He assumed an injured air.

"It is not well," he answered, sullenly. "Your cake is all dough as far as I am concerned. If you think I am going to marry the gawky little country chit, you make a big mistake, I can tell you."

"She is neither ugly nor gawky. It is her shabby clothes and her shyness—not being used to company. She has in her the making of a pretty, stylish—"

"Pretty and stylish—the deuce! She is a greeny and a gawk, I say. The boys would guy me if I were fool enough to marry that little ninny. She doesn't know a thing about the ways and manners of the world."

His mother's lip curved contemptuously.

"And if she did know anything about the world, would she marry *you*, do you suppose—*you*, a drunkard, a half idiot, a—"

"Hush your abuse of me, or I'll tell the girl what a job you are trying to put up on her. I'll call her and tell her this minute."

"Do, if you dare!" cried Selma Brent, catching his arm in the grip of her slender, sinewy fingers. "If you breathe one word of such a thing to the girl, or if you refuse to obey my wish about her, you shall not only never have an-

other cent from me, but I will have you put in an asylum and treated to a strait-jacket. Do you hear?"

Her dark-blue eyes contracted into steely points that seemed to pierce him.

He drew back. His own eyes drooped, his face paled.

"Hang it! a fellow can't joke with you," he said, sullenly. "The girl's good enough, I reckon—too good for me. I wish her better luck than to have me for a husband. Why can't you let us be?"

"I have told you that you must marry her—*must*, I say—you understand?"

"I'd like to know why I've got to make a sacrifice of myself for an ugly little thing with not a dollar to her name."

"I have plans that hang on this marriage—plans for your good as well as mine. You will ruin yourself and me by your obstinacy. You will be good and sensible. Here, sit down and smoke your cigar. Don't fall asleep. I will call you presently. I will show you a girl that *will* please you, since you don't like poor little Nan."

"Stop!" he called out as she turned from him. "Where's the whisky? You said—"

"I said you should have the bottle to-night if you pleased me. I will keep my word. You shall have it—but not now. You must keep cool awhile. I will call you presently."

"And give me the bottle?"

"Yes," she said, frowning in impatient contempt, "if you do as I want you to."

CHAPTER VI.

CINDERELLA AND HER GODMOTHER.

MRS. BRENT went into the room where Nan was waiting for her. The girl had seized upon a new magazine that lay on the table beside Mrs. Brent's fan and travel-

ing-bag, and was hungrily devouring its pages. The lady glided to her side and laid her hand caressingly on the girl's bent head.

"Oh—pardon me!" Nan cried, jumping up, ashamed of her preoccupation. "It is the first new magazine I have seen in so long a time."

"Poor child—I fancy anything new is a rarity here. Everything and everybody looks as old as the ark—except you—and even your face looks a deal too grave. Speaking of new things, have you looked at your new trunk?"

"Is that trunk for me? So fine, so large! I have nothing to fill it with, dear Mrs. Brent."

"We will contrive to fill it, never fear. It is not empty now. See here."

She threw back the lid of the handsome trunk. It was lined with ruby satin, and there were compartments for a bonnet, laces, gloves, handkerchiefs, and ribbons. She lifted out the tray of the trunk and set it on the floor. She took out from the lower part a stylish light-brown ulster, then a tailor-made costume of leaf-brown serge, the jacket and skirt stitched and braided.

"I am crazy to see how they fit," she said.

"Try them on now—that is a dear."

"Oh, your dresses are too long and large for me," Nan said, looking at the pretty suit admiringly.

"Only let's try. Take off your dress. Let me help you. Why, you have no corset on. Never wore one? Child, child, how you have been neglected! What a Mrs. Noah that old maid is! Well, here is a corset, a Paris-made one, light and elastic. Lucky I thought of it. Let me put it on you. Feels queer, does it? Oh, you'll get used to it. You'll get to like being squeezed. See how nicely your figure looks already. *Ciel!* What lovely arms and shoulders, and what a beautiful bust the little one has! Just see me kissing these dimples as though I were a lover. Why, how she is blushing! a perfect tide of rose

color? Did no one ever tell you before you had pretty shoulders, *chérie*?"

"Never. No one has ever seen them since I was a little child," Nan said, shrinking from the touch of Mrs. Brent's plump fingers upon her bare flesh.

The lady laughed merrily.

"Don't you know that in society we don't cover up this part of our charms? Dear, no! They are shown to the fullest advantage, even when they are nothing to boast of. But I'll take pity on your blushes. So we'll hurry with the dress. See, the skirt is not a bit too long—just comes to your ankles. It is quite time you discarded the ridiculously short frocks Miss Rachel has kept you in. This one is just right. Now for the jacket. See, it fits! it does fit—*Io triumphe!* If I had bet with you, I would have won. You are wondering now how I came to guess your size."

"Mrs. Brent, these are surely not for me?"

"Certainly they are. Whom else did you suppose they were for? I saw a man from your neighborhood—somebody who had business with Mr. Brent—and he told me you were about the size of my maid, Zeline, only not so tall, and that you wore short dresses. I immediately knew it was the short frocks that made you seem smaller, and I had these things fitted on Zeline at a venture. And they are just right. I am lucky always—in small ventures. I hope I shall be in big ones—if I ever undertake them. Now come and stand here where you can see yourself in this narrow, old-fashioned looking-glass. Why does Miss Rachel cover it up with yellow tarletan? Is it to make you think yourself a jaundiced fright? I'll take the liberty of removing it. Now look at your figure. Would you know yourself if you didn't see your face?"

"No, indeed!" exclaimed Nan, in wondering delight. "It is beautiful—the dress, I mean. Dear Mrs. Brent, you are too kind to think of me. I am afraid I have not

enough money to pay for these lovely things. Tell me—I know nothing of my own affairs, Mrs. Brent—”

“You can talk money business with Mr. Brent when you see him. Just now I want you to attend to the all-important business of dress. Look now at this set of underwear—skirts and night-dresses and other things—aren’t they dainty-looking, with their ruffles and embroideries? There is one more dress I ventured to have made for you. Here it is—an evening-gown. Isn’t it nice?”

“It is perfectly lovely!” cried Nan, looking with awe at the robe of cream-colored silk albatross, lace and ribbons. “Oh, I never could wear a dress like that! I should feel out of place in it!”

“No you won’t. Just as soon as it is on you will adapt yourself to it, and will feel perfectly at home in it. You are the kind of a girl to adapt yourself to nice clothes and surroundings. I must fix your hair before I put the gown on you, however,” she went on, taking out the round comb with which the mass of half-curled hair was pushed off from Nan’s forehead.

She gathered up the back hair and fastened it in a loose knot with a silver dagger she took from her own coil of blonde tresses. Then she drew the short hair in front, let a tendril or two fall behind the girl’s pretty ears, and combed some of it into a pretty fluffy bang becoming to Nan’s rather high, full brow. She peered round into the girl’s face.

“Oh, the powder! we must have just a touch of powder. It refines the skin and covers up sun-tan,” she said.

Before Nan understood what she meant, a soft puff full of perfumed, velvety powder had gone over her face and throat. Then Mrs. Brent took the rabbit’s foot from its place in her dressing-case and applied just a tinge of rouge to Nan’s cheeks and chin; smiling to herself at Nan’s unconsciousness of what was being done to her. She would

not allow her a single peep in the mirror until all was finished.

“Now for the gown.”

The creamy mass of lace and soft wool was dropped over Nan's bewildered head, and quickly fastened and adjusted by Mrs. Brent's skillful fingers. Nan looked down at the lace and loops of ribbon, and then behind. What a train! a long billowy train, like those worn by the ladies in the novels. She—Nan Haggard—in a dress with a train! It was like a fairy tale.

“Now you may look in the glass— No, not yet!” cried Mrs. Brent. “I had forgotten the shoes. You must have slippers on. Here is a pair; I bought them my own number, thinking if they did not fit you I could wear them; but I feel sure they will fit. But first, the stockings. Here they are; a lovely pair—cream-silk, embroidered. Don't stoop down; it will muss your lace. Let me put them on.”

Down she went upon her knees, and, in spite of Nan's blushes and remonstrances, she pulled off the ugly shoes and home-knit stockings from the girl's pretty feet, and put on in their place the dainty hose of cream silk and the black rosetted slippers with high French heels. Then she jumped up and took hold of the girl's hand.

“Now come and see if you know yourself,” she said, as she placed her before the mirror.

Nan looked, and started back in amazement.

Know herself? Indeed she did not. The arrangement of the hair had changed the whole contour of her face. The powder—the touch of rouge—gave her eyes unusual brilliancy; while the stays, the long train, the bare, round arms escaping from the open sleeves, and the rose-white bosom swelling amid the laces of the square-cut bodice—all this had utterly transformed her. Could that be she—Nan Haggard—gawky, elfish little Nan—that graceful shape in the flowing robe, with the high-piled hair, the

shining eyes and lovely arms and bust? When she had read, in the old novels stowed away in Mrs. De Lacy's lumber-room, about beautiful heroines with statuesque faces and steps of grace, she sighed and looked at her own reflection in the broken looking-glass, saying to herself that nothing but Safa's magic ointment could ever transform her into a beauty.

And now behold! without Safa's ointment or any magic but that of dress, she was transfigured into something very like beauty.

Mrs. Brent danced about her, enjoying her amazement.

"Edmund must see you; I must call Edmund. He declared the dresses would never fit. Edmund, come here!" she called, running to the door.

"Oh, Mrs. Brent!"

Nan snatched a shawl and drew it about her. Mrs. Brent, laughing, pulled it off as Edmund came to the door. He stopped short, and stared at Nan. For a minute he did not recognize her in the least. He had not the slightest idea that this charming vision was the short-frocked and awkward girl he had made fun of half an hour ago.

"Let me present to you Miss Haggard," said his mother, taking Nan by the hand.

"Why—why—is that really Miss Haggard? 'Pon my word! What's made such a change in her looks?" he cried, staring at the blushing girl.

"Nothing, only she is a modern Cinderella, who has found her godmother," returned Mrs. Brent, gayly.

"I should like to play Prince to this Cinderella," he said.

His mother clapped her hands with delight. It was the brightest speech she had ever heard him make. It was not often he said a bright or a gallant thing. But she had given him the cue.

"You can begin to play Prince at once!" she cried.

“See, her slipper has dropped off! It *is* too large. Down on your knees and— Ah! you need no prompting in your part.”

For he had really dropped on his knee, and was putting the slipper back in its place.

“What a pretty foot!” he said, holding the slender, arched member in his palm. “I would like to kiss it!”

“Well done, Sir Prince!” exclaimed his pleased mother. “Nan, you are a little witch! You have worked your sorcery on this indifferent young man. I never knew him to pay a compliment before.”

Nan hardly knew whether to laugh or cry. She was frightened—ashamed. All this was so new to her. When the young man rose and stood close to her, looking into her face with his bold eyes, and down at her exposed neck and arms, she turned from red to white, and catching up the shawl once more, wound it around her. Mrs. Brent tapped her cheek in playful reproof, but praised her modesty at the same time.

“I am glad you are not like the seasoned society girls—aren’t you, Edmund? Few of them are desirable as wives. Now we must think of bed, or we shall have Miss Rachel after us. Good-night, Sir Prince.”

She put her arm around Edmund’s neck and kissed him affectionately.

“May I kiss Cinderella, too?” he said, turning to the girl.

“You have her godmother’s consent,” said Selma, gayly. “Kiss him, Nan; he is not like a stranger, you know. We are all one family now.”

Nan did not know what to say. She stood silent, crimson, frightened. She suddenly felt herself clasped in the young man’s arms, drawn to his breast, and his mustached mouth pressed to hers.

“Oh! I ought not to have let him do that! I am

ashamed of myself," she said, burying her face in her hands, while Edmund, laughing, ran out of the room.

"Nonsense! there's no harm in it!" cried Mrs. Brent, gayly. "I'll run now and show the boy where he is to sleep."

He was waiting for her in the hall.

"Well, what do you say now?" she asked.

"She's a sweet girl—a deuced sweet girl. Such arms she has, and such a nice little foot! Who'd have thought a little dressing-up would have changed her so? It was cunning in you to fix her up in that enticing way."

"You won't object now to marrying her?"

"N—o," hesitating; "but—well, won't Cora cut up like the devil when she finds it out?"

"Cora again! Have I not forbidden you to speak that woman's name in my presence? A coarse, brazen creature, not to be named in the same breath with this girl. Thank Heaven, she is out of the way! She'll never dare set foot on the island any more."

"That was a mean trick you played to get her away from there. A put-up job between you and old Gasker."

"I'll play her a worse one if she ever goes back. Gasker has instructions what to do with her. You promised to give her up; if you do not keep that promise you will see that I—"

"Come, no more threats, or I'll turn mulish about this country miss you want to tie me to. You keep your own promise—about that bottle. Where is it?"

"It is here," she answered, drawing a bottle from beneath her overskirt.

"It is only two thirds full," he grumbled.

"There's enough in it to send you drunk to bed. If there was more you'd have another fit, and I want you to keep your small share of brains clear for awhile—until—"

"Until I am married and out of the way. The girl, too—you want her out of the way. I can see that much, if I

haven't but a small share of brains. You've got some reason for it you're keeping dark. Maybe you think she's so pretty she'll cut you out, or you don't want old Brent to have the expense of supporting her. Why don't you let her stay here, then, and feed the chickens, and wear calico frocks, and marry some clod-hopper. What are you taking her to the city for? I can't see through you."

"I don't expect you to. I only ask you to obey me. That you must do, or my purse shuts against you forever. You understand?"

"I ought to. You din it into my ears enough," he said, preparing to mount the stairs.

She looked after him. She saw him stop at the landing and put the bottle to his mouth.

"Besotted idiot!" she said to herself. "And to think he is *my* son! What a burden of shame he has been to me! I might have been a different woman if there had been a creature of my own blood I could love and cherish. Well, I can make him my tool in carrying out the purpose I have set my heart upon. And it will be the best thing that could happen to him—to marry a girl like this—a girl he never could get if she was not as ignorant of the world and men as a baby, and to go with her off to the island out of the reach of temptation to drink, and where he will not mortify and disgrace me. It is best for him and for me. As for the girl! Poor little simpleton! Well, there must always be a victim."

With a little philosophic shrug of the shoulders, Selma turned from the railing of the stairs and went back into the room she was to occupy with Nan.

"What, disrobed already, my sweet Cinderella!" she said, as she saw that the girl had undressed and was attired in her coarse, clean white night-gown.

"It is so late," said Nan, "and Miss Rachel does not like late hours."

Selma detected the little constraint in the tones, and saw the half-troubled shadow on the child's face.

"I was too fast to-night," she said to herself. "I should not have let Edmund kiss her. Ignorant as she is, she has fine instincts. I must be careful or I shall lose her."

"We must not offend Miss Rachel," she said, aloud, "and we must not offend you, my dear, with our innovation of ways that are new to you. I am afraid we have frightened you, by trying to make you feel yourself one of us, and not a stranger."

"Oh, you are very, very kind!" Nan said, hurriedly. "I am not used to so much friendliness, that is all. I have seen so few households beside this one—and this does not seem a household now—since Grandma Calvert died. I know I seem to you very ignorant, for I am. I don't know anything about how people in the world think and talk and act. You must bear with me, dear Mrs. Brent, and teach me."

Selma promised, and she kissed her, and then the girl knelt down by the bed and said her prayers, as she had done every night of her life, and the woman of the world, with her seared heart, looked at the white-gowned, kneeling little figure, and felt a stirring of compunction and pity that was new to her. But the sting of conscience was not strong enough to lead her to give up her victim. She had too much at stake.

CHAPTER VII.

GOOD-BYE TO THE COUNTRY HOME.

"I WILL be up before day," Nan had said to herself, as she was dropping to sleep; but it was broad day when her brown eyes flashed open. She lay for a minute bewildered by the fact that she was not in her own little garret-room, but in the guest-chamber—in the high-piled, best bed, with

its big tester and Irish chain bed-quilt of bright red-and-green patchwork, with the ancient engraving of fatherly William Penn, in long waistcoat and knee-breeches, driving a hard bargain with "Lo, the poor Indian," looking down upon her from the mantel-piece.

"How came I here?" was her first thought. Then she caught sight of Selma's dainty garments hanging across a chair, and suddenly remembering, turned to look admiringly at the golden head lying on the pillow next to hers.

She slid softly out of bed. No need to wake Mrs. Brent yet, she thought. She wondered if she should put on the pretty gray dress Selma had laid out for her. As she held the skirt reflectively in her hand she caught sight of the cream-tinted gown she had worn last night. A blush tingled through her—a blush half shame, half pleasure. She remembered her bare arms—Edmund Hoyt's look—Edmund Hoyt's kiss.

"What would Mrs. De Lacy say—and Miss Rachel—and Mr. Slow?" she thought, going over in her mind her little world, and picturing them as witnesses to last night's performance.

"But Mrs. Brent said it was all right. *She* ought to know. We live so out of the world here. We are fossils—Mrs. De Lacy says so herself."

She decided to put on her calico frock, and go out and help Miss Rachel with the breakfast, as usual.

When she had buttoned it up behind she looked at herself in the cracked mirror.

"No wonder that young men thought me a country gawk!" she thought. "I look hideous—and how ridiculously childish! Yet I did look like a lady last night—like the picture of a lady in the old keepsake at Mrs. De Lacy's."

Miss Rachel was clattering away with the pots and pans at the stove when Nan entered the kitchen. She turned her eyes upon the girl, but vouchsafed no response to her

timid "good-morning," but went on with her work, her face rigid and sullen.

Nan strained the milk and put it away, made the biscuit, and set them in the oven to bake; then she went into the garden to gather fresh lettuce and radishes for breakfast.

She was pulling up the round, ruby-colored little radishes, shaking the fresh earth from their roots, and putting them into a basket, when she heard a laugh overhead. She looked up, and there, in the end window of her little room, sat Edmund smoking a cigar.

To Nan's unsophisticated eyes he looked very handsome and nonchalantly graceful as he bowed and smiled down upon her. A minute before there had been a sneer on his full, sensuous mouth as he watched the girl at her rustic task. The rural grace of her occupation and the pathetic charm of her little figure, half girl, half child, in the outgrown frock, was lost on him.

Nan sprung to her feet, spilling half the radishes. She shook the garden soil from her skirts, and tried to laugh, blushing furiously. But Edmund remembered his part, and nodded reassuringly.

"Hurrah for you! you are worth a dozen lazy city girls!" he cried. "But don't you know we are to start early? I wouldn't be left in this prosy place for anything; you must hurry and get ready. Make Selma get up; she will lie in bed until ten o'clock if you don't."

Nan gathered up her radishes and ran into the house. Breakfast was nearly ready. She said to Miss Rachel:

"I'll go and wake Mrs. Brent."

She found the lady awake, lying in bed, her fair brow knit in thought. She stretched out her arms with a smile, and drew the girl to her.

"Cinderella, what do you mean by turning back into kitchen-maid? Go, take off the calico frock and put on your traveling-suit. I'll get up and help you get ready."

Nan obeyed. The kitchen-maid's frock was exchanged

for the pretty light-gray serge, and Mrs. Brent fastened the collar and cuffs, and arranged Nan's lovely hair.

"I did not show you your hat; it matches the dress," she said, and took from a compartment of the trunk a gray felt English walking-hat with trimming of black velvet and curling feather-tips. "Put it on, and then go and gather some flowers for your belt and mine—some of the wild-roses I saw in the twilight when we came; they were in a corner of the orchard fence. They are prettier than Miss Rachel's phlox and marigolds. Take Edmund with you, to keep him from coming in and hurrying me. I will be ready by the time you get back."

Selma did not really want the roses, but she did not care to have Nan see her put the artificial roses from the rouge-pot on her cheeks. She wanted the girl to have perfect faith in her genuineness. Then she wished Edmund to see how trim and graceful Nan looked in her traveling-dress.

The two went down the hill toward the clump of rose-bushes at its foot. Suddenly they came upon Miss Rachel. She was standing behind a large tree, and she was so visibly discomposed at seeing them that Nan wondered what her being there could mean. Why had she left the breakfast-room and come here to stand beside the road? Was she watching for any one? Could she be watching for the professor, who would soon be passing, on his way to the school-house? Had his present to her, the evening before, and Miss Rachel's jealousy in consequence, rekindled the embers of love in that elderly maiden's breast? And was she here to say a word to her old suitor—perhaps to ask him to call to see her this afternoon as he came from his school?

"It is a pity we have frustrated her little plan," Nan thought, as Miss Rachel stepped into the road and responded with a grim look to Edmund's bow. Then she said shortly to Nan:

"You'd better come back to the house, gettin' your smart clothes all messed with dew. I've been a-lookin' after the speckled pullet what's missin'. There's nobody to see to anythin' but me."

Nan could have said, "You have just seen me feed the speckled pullet," but she refrained from saying anything, and Miss Rachel strode rapidly toward the house.

The roses had been gathered, and they were returning, when they saw the professor in his flowered gown and broad hat coming along the path. Nan asked Edmund to go on, while she waited for her old teacher. He held an open "Smith's Grammar" before him, and he was so busy conning the parsing lesson for the day that Nan had to speak before he looked up and saw her.

He pushed up his spectacles and stared at her in amazement. He did not recognize her at first. Then, as she came toward him smiling, he exclaimed:

"Is it a vision? No, it is my little Nan herself. But what a fine lady she is! So you did get a birthday-present after all. I am glad Miss Rachel opened her heart."

"It was my guardian—his wife rather," Nan said, her eyes dropping under the professor's look of admiring affection. Then she told him what had happened—the change that had come into her life, the good-bye she must say to him and to the old school-house in the hollow.

He looked troubled and dejected, but he shook off the feeling and congratulated her heartily.

"I felt a way would be opened for you, Nan—a broader way. You deserved better opportunities. You will have them now, I trust. I am sorry you could not see Mrs. De Lacy, but I will take her your message, and the little gifts this very evening. Good-bye, Nan—my dear, good little pupil. The old school-house will be mighty lonesome without you."

He took her hand and pressed it in both his palms. He looked at her tear-wet face wistfully, as though he would

like to kiss the tremulous red lips. But Miss Rachel came to the door, and he dropped Nan's hand and turned off, vigorously blowing his nose in his red silk handkerchief.

Breakfast was ready—a nice breakfast, served in homely but clean and appetizing style. Miss Rachel was neatness incarnate. Before they rose from the table, the hack that had been directed to come at eight rattled to the door. Nan had put a few books and little articles that had been her mother's into the new trunk; and she had written a few lines to Mrs. De Lacy and put it into a small parcel which Mr. Slow would take to the dear old friend. Then holding Kitty in her arms, and with Bruin walking around and eying her with mournful intelligence, Nan said good-bye to the only home she had ever known. Mrs. Brent had slipped a bill into Miss Rachel's hand, and she bid adieu to the sobbing girl not ungraciously. Then Nan shook hands with Seeley and Bruin, gave Kitty a last hug, climbed into the hack beside Mrs. Brent, and took her last look at the old orchard through a mist of tears as the hack jolted and rattled away.

CHAPTER VIII.

NAN IN THE CITY.—THE FIRST EVENING IN HER NEW HOME.—A SONG INTERRUPTED.

LATE that afternoon Nan arrived in the city. The journey had been novel and exciting to the girl who had never been five miles away from Haggard Creek since she came to it a baby. It was a keen pleasure to her to watch the swiftly changing landscape from the car-window, the panorama of woods and mountains, of brown country houses nestled among green hills, of way-side towns, and now and then a pretty stream, and at last the broad, rolling river, at the mouth of which the city was situated.

She had never imagined anything so pleasant as sitting upon soft cushions, wearing a stylish dress, and having her

comfort looked after by a lovely woman and a handsome young man, who brought her lemonade and oranges and told her the names of the towns they passed through.

She did not notice that all these attentions were the result of his mother's suggestions. These suggestions were casually dropped in Selma's low, soft voice; and Nan did not see that they were enforced by a look that Edmund well understood.

In spite of all his mother could do, he slept a goodly part of the journey. She excused this to Nan on the ground that he had been traveling a good deal of late and his rest had been broken. She pinched him awake more than once, and stopped the angry exclamation on his lips by one of those warning looks. Nan thought him very kind, and very good-looking in his tasseled traveling-cap.

It was sunset when the train steamed into the big depot. Nan's eyes were caught by the sight of the masts and rigging of the ships in the bay, and the tall chimneys of the steamboats. She had a glimpse of the blue, broad water—her first sight of the sea, and clasped her hands with delight.

She sat in the carriage, silent with wonder, as they were driven along the streets. She saw on either side long rows of tall houses and streams of people hurrying along as though to some all-important goal. At each cross-street she saw long lighted vistas at either hand. She heard the rattle of cars and drays, the roll of carriages, the hum of machinery. For the first time she had an idea of the number and the variety of people it takes to make up the world, and of the rush of life and work in the great centers where human beings are gathered.

The carriage stopped before a brown-stone house.

"We are at home!" cried Selma, jumping out and extending her hand. "Come in and let us have some tea. How hungry I am!"

They were received by a pretty house-maid who opened

for them the door of the cheerful, luxurious sitting-room. Nan looked around for her guardian. She longed to see this man—her father's friend—to whose care he had committed his child.

Selma saw her glance wander around the room.

“You are looking for Mr. Brent,” she said. “He has probably gone to bed. He is in wretched health, nervous and dreading to meet any one. You will see but little of him, Nan. I will do my best to supply his place. I want you to feel at home with us—to feel as if we were your parents, and Edmund”—she stopped long enough for Nan to notice the pause—“and Edmund will do everything he can to make you happy; will you not, my love?” she went on, turning to Edmund. He was only intent on getting to his dinner.

“Certainly,” he muttered.

“He is now waiting to take you down to dinner. Come on, my children. I am dying for a good cup of tea after the jolting I have endured this day.”

She led the way to a cheerful room, where a nice little dinner was set—a dinner for three only. Nan's guardian did not appear.

After dinner Selma took Nan to the music-room; giving Edmund a glance that commanded him to follow. He would have preferred staying to joke with the pretty servant who waited at table, and persuade her to give him some wine.

Selma seated herself at the piano and began to play. She had a soft touch, and she played such music as she was sure Nan would like—sweet Italian music, full of tenderness and fancy.

It was the first time Nan had ever heard real music. The only instrument she had ever seen played was the cheap little parlor organ with which Miss Susan Brooks accompanied the hymn-singing in the church at Haggard Creek, and the once grand piano—now a worn-out rattle-

trap—in Mrs. De Lacy's moth-eaten drawing-room. The old-fashioned music played upon its yellow keys—some of them quite dumb—by Mrs. De Lacy's rheumatic hands, was a very different thing to the exquisite notes that fell from Selma's white fingers as they caressed the ivory keys.

She sat half within the bay-window, drinking in the dreamy music. Selma turned around and looked at her with an admiring smile.

“One can see you love music,” she said. “You sing, I know. With those eyes and that sweet-speaking voice, you need not deny it. Now I can't sing a note, and Edmund is passionately fond of songs. I will play an accompaniment, if you will sing something—anything.”

“I? Oh, I don't know whether I can sing at all—fit for you to hear. Mrs. De Lacy liked to hear me sing. She taught me some old songs. They are all I know.”

“Old songs, like old wine, are best; particularly old love songs. Don't you like old love songs, Edmund, dear?”

“Yes. I like the ‘Yellow Rose of Texas’ and ‘Buffalo Girls, Won't You—Come Out’—”

His mother's look cut him short. He did not care for any songs, except some rattling drinking choruses and beer-garden ditties, but he knew he must back his mother's request.

“Yes, do sing us a love song, Nan,” he said, and came to her, holding out his hand to lead her to the piano. She rose, confused and blushing, but Selma put her at her ease. She played a few notes of the air of “Highland Mary,” and looked up at Nan. “You know this, I am sure.”

“Oh, yes. I used to hear my mother sing it when I was a little child. I got Mrs. De Lacy to teach me.”

“It begins so—doesn't it? I have forgotten the words,” Selma said, and began to hum the air as she played.

Before Nan knew it almost she had begun to sing—

tremulously at first, but presently her voice grew clear and strong—a sweet, bird-like voice, just suited to the tender ballad. Mrs. Brent nodded encouragingly, and she began the second verse. She was interrupted—a startled exclamation broke into the song. The eyes of all three turned to the door. Nan saw a pale, emaciated man, with a figure that had once been powerful, but was now stooped and shrunk. His sallow, deeply lined face was convulsed with emotion—that seemed amazement mixed with terror. His eyes were fastened upon Nan; he made a step toward her.

“Anabel—is it Anabel?” he cried. “Have you come back to punish me again. I—”

His further utterance was summarily checked by Selma. She seized his arm and pulled him out of the room.

Nan, wondering and frightened, looked at Edmund for an explanation of the strange scene.

“It’s the old chap—Brent. You know he has spells like that sometimes. It’s softening of the brain, the doctors say. I don’t know what Selma ever took him for. I thought it was for his money, but he doesn’t seem to have such a lot of that. At least I don’t get to handle it. How he did stare at you—like you was a ghost. And what was that he called you?”

“He called me Anabel; it was my mother’s name, and it is mine, too—only no one calls me by it. Mr. Brent must have taken me for my mother—I am like her, they say. He knew her well; he was often at our house. He was my father’s friend—and mother’s, I think—but—”

She stopped. There rose in her mind a dim recollection of something she had seen in those early days, when she and her mother lived alone at the cottage by Dead Hopes Mine. Was it a dream?—or had she really seen her mother standing, with a white face and flashing eyes, before this man, and heard her say:

“Do not dare to come here again! Oh! I thought you

were my husband's friend. I shall tell him how he is deceived."

And the man had answered with a threat—she could not understand; but he went away, and then her mother had caught her up and cried over her, saying, in the midst of her sobs:

"We have no friend, little one—no friend in this strange country!"

Had she dreamed this, or was it a memory of what had truly happened? It had come into her mind more than once, but never so vividly as when that voice calling her "Anabel" fell on her ear. No, she could not have dreamed the scene—it was too vivid. But what did it mean? She roused herself from the maze of perplexed thought. Edmund was saying:

"I think he must have scared you pretty bad; you look kind of dazed. He doesn't scare me, but he makes me mad sometimes—the disrespectful way he talks to me—an old, shaky chap like him. Selma won't let me talk back at him. He wants me to go and stay on an old island he owns 'way down—two or three hundred miles south of here—the loneliest place you ever saw. Good fishin' and huntin' there, though; and, if they'd let me have the ones I want to keep me company, I wouldn't mind staying there, if they'd pay me for it. There's nobody on it but the overseer and the blacks that raise the rice, and sugar-cane, and the oranges—"

"An island in the sea, where oranges and sugar-cane grow! How I should like to go there! I wouldn't mind living there, if I were you."

"Yes, you would. I tell you it's lonesome as a graveyard. It's named Lost Island, and the frogs croak there all night—a regular tune. Cora used to mock them on the banjo. She could play anything she wanted to—play on the piano, too—and she never took a lesson. She's a rattler, I tell you! Can't you play?"

“Not at all; I wish I could. Can you?”

“Yes; I know a lot of tunes—picked them up around town. Here’s a funny song the girls sing at Milligan’s Varieties. It’s all the go.”

He sat down to the piano, and, thumping an accompaniment, began to sing in his really sweet tenor one of those dance-songs with catchy airs that hide gross allusions under the seeming nonsense of the words. Nan had not the slightest idea of this underlying coarseness. She rather enjoyed the lively air and Edmund’s energetic rendering.

He began another still more broad, and asked, at the conclusion of the first verse:

“Do you know what that means?”

She shook her head.

“It’s just nonsense-verse, like ‘Mother Goose,’” she said.

“Oh, what a greeny you are!” he cried. “You couldn’t fool Co—”

“Edmund, you are boring Nan, and she is tired and sleepy.”

Selma appeared in the door. Nan did not see the scathing look she bestowed on Edmund. She turned to her with a smile, and said:

“Let me take you to your room, my dear. I know you are tired. It is past your early bed-time.”

Nan saw that she looked pale and worried. When they were alone, Selma said to her:

“Every house, they say, has its skeleton. You have had a glimpse of ours to-night. Mr. Brent’s mind is giving way. He has never been himself since he happened to a dreadful accident ten years ago in some mining operation.”

“Oh, I know! It was at Dead Hopes Mine—that fatal old mine—fatal to my father and mother and to him, their—”

She hesitated with the word "friend" on her lips. Selma finished the sentence.

"Your father's friend. Yes, he was indeed his friend—and your mother's. You see how he was affected at sight of you—he says you are the image of your mother. He feels remorseful for having in a manner neglected you all these years—but you now see the cause. His mind was shattered by the shock of that explosion. He has neglected business, things have gone wrong, and lately he has speculated unwisely. These fresh troubles weigh on him. They make him morbid. He has conceived a strange dislike to poor Edmund, and I must send my boy away. It is a sore trial to me."

She put her handkerchief, a dainty bit of cambric, to her eyes. Nan's tender heart was filled with sympathy. She took Selma's hand and pressed it to her lips. Then a sudden thought came to her.

"You spoke of money troubles just now, dear Mrs. Brent, and here you have taken me on your hands—bought me all these nice things. I can not take anything more. I will not stay here, a burden upon you. I must do something to earn my own support. I must indeed."

"You—my child? What could you do in this crowded, pushing world? Look at yourself in the glass there. That little head was made to be caressed, not to bother itself about the question of daily bread and butter. No, you must stay with me until you are married."

"Married!" Nan's eyes opened wide. "That will be a long time, if it ever comes. I am not old enough."

"The younger the better, I sometimes think. It is woman's destiny to love and to make some one who loves her happy."

Nan was silent, taking in this new thought put into her head by the wily woman. At last she said:

"I would rather go to school and be educated, and fitted for some career. But I know I have not money enough

for this. I have not money enough to support me if I should go to the free school, and I will not—I can not be dependent on you, dear friend. Could I not sell that land, and get something, if it was only a little? It must be worth something for the timber that is on it.”

“Yes, it is true. It is of some value; but the difficulty is to find a purchaser, and you want the money immediately. Mr. Brent would buy it of you, and run the chances of finding some one to take it off his hands; but you can not sell it lawfully until you are of age.”

“Oh, that is so long—too long!”

“Or until you are married. Then your husband is one with you, and he can transact any business of yours. But, dear child, don’t trouble your little head with these hard problems. Be content. Let the morrow take care of itself. There is your nice white bed waiting for you. Take a good sleep, and wake early, and let Edmund take you out sight-seeing. You must see the pictures and the play, and hear some good music. To think you have never been to a theater! How I will enjoy watching you when you see your first play. Good-night, and sweet sleep and dreams come to you.”

She pressed her soft perfumed lips to the girl’s brow and left her, having artfully sowed in her mind two thoughts that would germinate. First, the thought of her dependence, the feeling that her support must come from those who were already embarrassed in business. Second, the thought of marriage, both as a state of blissful destiny, to love and to make happy some one who loved her, and as a step necessary to getting the money she needed. If she were married, she could sell that land which now yielded her no profit.

These thoughts were busy in her brain long after her curly head was nestled on its soft pillow. They almost put out of her mind the recollection of the strange looks and words of the man who had interrupted her song, and

the stranger recollection his face had caused to start up from the mists of her memory. The scene was repeated that night in her dreams, only now she was no longer a child, but a girl grown, and her mother had appealed to her to fly from this man—her father's enemy—and when she had tried to get away she found her feet entangled in the coils of a snake. She woke trembling with horror.

“Oh, it is only a dream,” she thought, with a feeling of relief. “A snake means treachery, and nobody is treacherous here. They are so kind—Mrs. Brent and her son—and they have no object in being kind to me—a poor, friendless orphan.”

The moon was shining against her window. It opened above a balcony, and as she lay she could hear the notes of a guitar softly touched, and presently a voice began to sing. It was Edmund's rich voice that sung two verses of Shelley's pretty serenade:

“ ‘ I wake from dreams of thee,
And a spirit in my feet
Has led me—who knows how?
To thy chamber window, sweet.’ ”

It was Selma who played the guitar, and it was Selma who had roused him up from his nap on the sofa and forced him to sing the song she had made him learn. Like most half-witted beings, he could readily learn anything by heart—rhymes particularly—though he had hardly an idea of the thought or sentiment contained in them.

But Nan knew nothing of this. She lay listening to the music and the beautiful words of the love song, and her heart thrilled with a strange new longing. What wonder that her fancy should begin to weave a halo for this, the first young man she had ever seen? So much for Selma's plan. She had done more than one stroke of work on this night.

CHAPTER IX.

SELMA REVEALS HER PLANS.

AFTER Selma had left Nan, wishing her happy dreams, she went back to the room where she had left her husband. By this time he would have recovered from the shock he had received. She had given him a stimulant that had the effect of strengthening his brain for the time.

She found him walking aimlessly about the room. He had lighted the gas in all the burners, and had even lighted the candles on the mantel. He looked at her in a wild yet deprecating way. He was afraid of this woman, who had married him, as he had found out, for his money, and who felt herself bitterly deceived and wronged because he had not the wealth report had credited him with.

"Well," she said, as she seated herself and motioned for him to take a seat in front of her, "have you come to your senses? Are you not ashamed to have made such an exhibition of yourself before a stranger?"

"Who was she—who was that young woman?" he asked, huskily, as he dropped into a chair, his bony frame shaking.

"She is Nan Haggard, your ward, that you have neglected so long."

"Nan Haggard? Nan Haggard is a child."

"She was a child—ten years ago. Did you think she was going to stay one?—I went after her and brought her away, as I told you I meant to do."

"But not here! Why did you bring her here? You must send her away—you must send her away at once!"

"There is no place to send her. She can not stay at Haggard Creek any longer. She would soon know—what I don't intend she shall know."

“She must not stay here; I could not stand it. I tell you she is the living image of her mother—the same voice, the same face. I thought I saw before me the woman that I—”

He stopped and caught his breath convulsively, then dropped his face in his hands.

“The woman that you loved, though she was the wife of your employer. Yes, I know that; you have told it in your sleep, and betrayed it when you were awake. But what of that? The woman is dead; she has been in her grave for ten years.”

“She does not stay in her grave,” he said, looking up with haggard, blood-shot eyes. “She leaves it to haunt me—she comes every night—she—”

“Stuff and nonsense!” cried Selma, impatiently. “You are simply crazy. Why should she haunt you? You could not make more ado if you had murdered the woman.”

She was looking at him sharply as she said this. She saw his face change, a strange look came into his eyes—a frightened, wild expression. Instantly Selma knew that what she had often vaguely suspected was true.

She bent close to him and caught his arm in her steel-like grasp.

“It *is* true,” she said, her face near to his. “You *did* do that deed! You *did* did murder Anabel Haggard!”

His face was pitiful to see. It was convulsed with terror and agony.

“I did not do it on purpose,” he answered, faintly. “I would have died first. I meant the blow for him. He had cursed me—he had threatened me—”

“Because he had found out that you had deceived him about the mine, and that you had made love to his wife while he was gone. Yes, you killed them both—the woman you loved and the man you had cheated. That is your secret. You might have told me at first; you might have known I would find it out. A horrible secret it is.

No wonder you can not rest; no wonder you imagine she comes to you from the grave. No—”

“Silence, woman! Have you no mercy?” he cried, in a loud, unshaking voice—such a voice as had been his in his prime. He started to his feet and stood before her.

“How dare *you* to judge me so hardly?”

She half cowered under his look.

“I am your wife,” she said. “The disgrace of having married a criminal falls—”

“You married me for money,” he interrupted, with bitter vehemence. “You despised me when you found I did not have it. You would have left me at once if I had not—weak fool that I was!—told you the secret of Haggard’s mine. Then it was you who urged me to carry out that fraud—that wrong to Haggard’s child. I had had a warning not to go on with it—a warning that nearly cost me my life.”

“It was no warning; it was only a dream, or a fancy of your distempered brain.”

“It was no dream,” he muttered, in a changed voice. The flash of fitful strength died out of his face. He dropped feebly into a chair, and went on: “It was no fancy; it was she herself—Anabel Haggard—out of her grave. She came to me in the night. She made me get out of my bed and follow her. She made me charge the bore, and set the train, and ignite the fuse. Then she lifted her arm. ‘This is for punishment,’ she said; and at that instant came the shock that nearly tore my limbs apart. Do you think I would touch the accursed mine after that?”

“But I *will*,” she said. “I have no such cowardly fears. I will take the matter in my own hands. I have no longer any faith in you or your promises after the weakness you have shown to-night. You let your opportunity escape you. It was easy then, when the girl was a mere baby, and the lad was believed to be worthless—it

was easy for you, her supposed guardian, to have offered it for sale—to have bought it yourself, worked it, and found the gold vein you had pretended was exhausted. Now the task is harder. The girl is grown. She has friends that are on the lookout for her interests. Experts have lately examined the land and reported it to be rich in gold. Parties have come to buy it. They are at Haggard Creek now. They would have seen Nan Haggard to-morrow, and she would have found out that the land was valuable. Then all hope of your getting it would be over.”

“I don’t want it, I tell you. The girl shall have it. She shall have her rights. I’ll let her know to-morrow. I will make that much amends for the wrong I have done.”

Selma turned upon him with flashing eyes.

“You will not!” she said. “You will do no such thing! You talk of amending wrongs—where is the amendment of the wrong you did me? You deceived me into marrying you when you knew you were bankrupt. Now you are helpless and penniless, and I must turn nurse and drudge—I, who might have been the wife of a man of genius and position—a man who coins money by his brains! Do you think I will let you beggar me through your cowardly scruples? It is late in the day for you to have scruples. That girl does not know the good of money. She has been raised to work and hardship. I will see she does not suffer. She shall marry at once, and when she is married she shall sell you the land for a few hundred dollars.”

“The man she married would not be such a fool as to let her do it. He would suspect foul play.”

“The man she marries will do as I bid him, for the man will be Edmund Hoyt!”

“Edmund Hoyt!” Stephen Brent once more flashed into strength. “Edmund Hoyt—that drunken brute—that idiot—that—”

“Be silent, if you please,” Selma commanded. She had grown pale with anger. “You are speaking to me of my son, remember.”

“You know him as well as I do. I tell you that child—Anabel’s child—shall not be given to that—that dissipated creature. I will prevent it. I will warn her. I—”

“Try it if you dare. I will lock you in this room and send for a keeper of the mad-house to put a strait-jacket upon you and take you away. I will, as sure as I stand here!”

He seemed suddenly to collapse as she hissed this threat in his ear. He dropped his head on his hands—his usual attitude, in which he often sat motionless for hours. Her anger passed as she looked at him.

“I mean no harm to the girl,” she said. “Edmund will make her a very good husband. They will go to Lost Island. He can get no liquor there. He will reform, and his mind will grow stronger. She likes him; she has never known any other young man to compare him with. She will be content. Where is the great wrong in this?”

He made no reply. His spirit seemed to be broken; he lapsed into the silent, trance-like mood which was a feature of his disorder.

Selma looked at him, as he sat there, a bowed, shrunken, pitiable figure, with mingled pity and contempt.

“Yes; he will soon be helpless and a bankrupt,” she thought. “There is only one hope left—Nan Haggard’s gold. I must work this scheme to get it. It is forced upon me. I can not help myself. It is fate.”

She went into the sitting-room, shook Edmund out of his heavy sleep as he lay on the sofa, and primed him for the serenade that waked Nan from her first slumber, and waked also that first thrill of passionate emotion in her young breast.

CHAPTER X.

NAN HAS A VISITOR AND A LETTER.—SHE GETS SIGHT OF NEITHER.

Two days had gone by. Sight-seeing was a delightful and novel experience to Nan. Edmund was her cicerone, but Selma was far too wise to let him go unaccompanied by her. She knew how to restrain him, how to cover his blunders, how to make his stupidity seem thoughtfulness, and his nonsense seem wit. She had to be constantly watchful of him, while she exerted all her powers to fascinate Nan.

In this she fully succeeded. The little, ignorant girl thought this charming woman the realization of every ideal she had ever formed in her romantic brain.

Edmund, because he was Selma's son, would have found favor in her eyes, even if he had been homely instead of handsome.

He was the first young companion she had ever had. Instinctive sexual sympathy drew her to him. She found a charm in being waited upon by him, in having him bring her flowers, and help her over rough places or crowded street crossings, and in the evening to teach her to play whist, or sing to her, while Selma played. If the thought that he was queer or coarse in manner and dull in talk ever came into her mind, she dismissed it as unjust.

"It is his way," she thought. "It is the way of all young men, no doubt. It is because I am so ignorant of the world."

But all the strange and beautiful things she saw did not make her forget her purpose of earning her own support.

The hurrying people in the streets, the business and bustle, the incessant throbbing of the great pulse of in-

dustry stirred the abundant energy there was in the girl. She felt she too must be up and doing.

She said so to Selma the third day after she had been in the house of her guardian, whom, however, she had not yet spoken to. She had seen him once after that first night, but the half-frightened look, hurriedly withdrawn, that he cast on her as he shambled by on his way out showed her that he wanted to avoid her.

“Where will you go to-day?” asked Selma, coming into the room, having exchanged her pretty morning-dress for a street suit of dark-green cloth that fitted her fine shape perfectly. “Shall we drive to the park? The trees are lovely now in their October ripeness—just a tinge of autumn crimson here and there. There has scarcely been a hint of frost. Or will you take another look at the galleries? You could hardly tear yourself away from those pictures. Or shall we go shopping—there are so many beautiful things to look at in the stores—and we will take Edmund along to carry our small packages.”

“I shall look well going shopping with an empty purse,” said Nan, smiling. “I think, instead of spending money, I will try to earn some. Indeed, I don’t feel right to be idle. I have always had something to do. Miss Rachel often told me I didn’t earn my salt, but I knew better. Now, I am not earning my salt, and I must set about doing it at once.”

“Nan, what a queer girl you are,” Selma said, tapping her cheek caressingly. “Most girls would be content to take the goods the gods provide. I admire your independence, my dear; but, Nan, it is harder than you think for a young woman without training or experience to get a place here where she can earn money. If you were competent to teach, or to do typewriting, or short-hand, or painting and decorating, or bookkeeping; but you do not know anything about these occupations, and it takes time and money to learn them.”

Nan's eager little face clouded over. She had no money. She could only get it by selling those acres of rocky and scantily timbered land, and she could not sell these, Selma had assured her, until she was married. Was marrying as difficult to achieve as getting a situation? she wondered.

Nan's ideas about marriage were very vague. She had never known any people who were living in the double state; her few friends had been widowed, or in elderly single blessedness. She had never spent a day under the roof with any married people until now, and it was impossible to think of Selma as a wife. The term was mockery, as applied to her.

So Nan's ideas of marriage had come only from old-fashioned novels. Judging from these, it was the final and blissful bringing together of two congenial souls, who henceforth had no more cares or tribulations. "They married, and were happy ever after." Marriage must, then, be a delightful consummation, apart from the fact that it gave an orphan girl a right to sell her heritage and obtain some money of her own. "Clearly, I must marry," thought little Nan. "But can I? Only heroines marry, who are beautiful and accomplished, and have golden hair and violet eyes and snowy little hands. Alas! I am not a heroine. I don't think any one will ever marry me—any one I could love."

And then Nan thought of the heroes she had read about and pictured to herself—the tall, gallant, handsome lovers, brave and tender, and intellectual and noble. But Mrs. De Lacy had told her the day of such grand beings had passed long ago. Men were no longer as in the good old times. Doubtless they were now all like Edmund; and assuredly Edmund was handsome, if he was not pale and intellectual looking. She looked at him closely as he came up with her shawl, that Selma had sent him for. He was a little too red and heavy looking; but what a round, white throat and beautiful, glossy hair he had! And his eyes—

they were certainly blue; but—well, she was a little goose, no doubt, for feeling as though she would like to draw back from him whenever he looked at her. No doubt he was as nice as any other young man of the present race. If he was not as gentle and courteous in his manner as Professor Slow, why, that must be because Professor Slow was a man of those “good old times” Mrs. De Lacy talked about. Edmund had called him a queer old fogey. Edmund was much handsomer, and Edmund was young—the first young companion Nan had ever had. The mysterious magnetism of sex and age drew her to him, while some higher instinct repelled her from him. But this higher instinct was silenced by the art of Selma in showing the best side of her son, and in throwing a glamour around him by well-gotten-up allusions to his good and picturesque traits.

Edmund was put upon his best behavior during these days. Selma kept a close and constant watch upon his movements. She would give him no money to buy anything to drink, and she doled out to him a sparing allowance of whisky with her own hands. He was furious, but he was deadly afraid of his mother. He knew she was his only dependence. If she did not give him money he would starve, and he would have nothing to drink—which was worse. He had just sense enough to see that things were at a crisis. The old chap, as he called his step-father, was on the eve of failure, and his mother was scheming how to feather her nest before the crash came. How that little country girl Nan, who had no money, could help to forward this scheme was beyond his comprehension. But Selma knew what she was about; Selma was as smart as they make them. So the thought ran in his dull brain.

As to marrying Nan—which his mother declared he must do—he did not like the idea. He thought himself quite superior to “that little greeny,” as he called her.

She didn't have half the "go" that Cora had. Cora was a Minorcan girl, the daughter of the overseer on Lost Island. She was older than Edmund, and she had seen a good deal of "life." She had run away with a sailor and came to the city, where she was a waitress in a beer saloon. Afterward she sung and played on the banjo on the stage of a beer garden where Edmund was a frequent visitor. When he was sent to Lost Island by Selma—who did not know what else to do with him—Cora went, too, made up with her "pappy," and took the head of the house at the island. Mrs. Brent found her installed as mistress there when she visited Lost Island, after she had conceived in her fertile mind the idea of sending Nan there to get her out of the way—Nan, her husband's heiress-ward, whom she had not seen as yet. She and Cora had what Edmund called "a devil of a row." She ordered the girl out of the house, but Cora flatly refused to go.

Then, with her usual skill at scheming, she invented a plan for getting rid of her. She played on the ignorance and credulity of the girl and her father, and caused them to receive a letter purporting to come from Cuba and relating that a fortune was left them there by a distant relative. She had gleaned some of their family history from their talk, and she knew the names of the rich kin they boasted of having.

Old Gasker's daughter went to Cuba, and Edmund was left forlorn. Selma gave instructions what course to pursue in case Cora returned, and also what to do if Edmund, as was probable, should return to Lost Island with a bride. He must have everything in readiness for her. He must see that she was well treated and had everything possible for her comfort, but on no account must she be allowed to leave the island. If he carried out these directions faithfully, he would be well rewarded; if not, he would lose his place. The overseer swore he would do just as she said, even without the reward. He was under the spell of this

fascinating woman. Who did not fall under it, if she willed that they should be her slave?

And so little Nan's destiny was all cut and dried by her guardian's wife before that subtle woman had even laid eyes on the orphan ward. Selma was surprised and disconcerted when she first saw the girl. She knew Nan had grown up in the backwoods without any advantages. She pictured to herself an ignorant girl, whom she could easily influence to do just what she wanted. Such a girl would be at once taken by Edmund's fine clothes and good looks. She would feel honored by his attentions, and make no scruple about accepting him as her husband.

Selma had found the little country girl to be of quite different material. Nan was even more innocent, more ignorant of the world than she had expected or believed it possible a girl of sixteen could be, but Haggard's orphan daughter was true to the good blood in her veins. She had fine instincts, that made her feel—though she could not explain why—that this well-dressed, fine-looking young man was not a fit mate for her. It was not that Nan thought herself superior to him. In her humility and ignorance she thought she was a most inferior little being—without accomplishments, with little education and no beauty, according to her high standard. All heroines she had read about had Grecian noses and were tall and stately, and could play and sing and dance divinely. Nan thought herself wofully lacking in attractions.

The repulsion she felt at times toward Edmund was purely a spiritual instinct. She did not understand it. She blamed herself for her ingratitude and did her best to resist it.

They went to the park that bright sunshiny day, and in the afternoon Selma took Nan with her on a little shopping excursion. While she was busy in one part of the store, looking at laces, Nan, who sat before the ribbon counter, amused herself by watching the deft-fingered way

the shop-girl, who had waited upon Selma, was rolling up the bright silken strips and putting them in place. Then she saw her turn to a customer, sell her yards upon yards of ribbon, mark down the sum it came to, with some trouble in getting it right, and biting of the nether lip and knitting of the brow over some fractional figures. Nan, though she had no love for arithmetic, had a thorough knowledge of its methods—so far as the professor had taught them—and she did the sum in her head, while the shop-girl was puzzling over it and biting the end of her pencil. She ventured to tell the result to the young lady, who flushed a little, but set it down at once, and when the purchaser was gone, said to Nan:

“Thank you. I get bothered and forget all I know sometimes. It’s tiresome, standing here all day, waiting on people, and half of them are so hard to please.”

“But you get paid for it—you have regular wages?” asked Nan, who was questioning with herself whether she could not do such work as this without experience and training.

“Yes, I am paid, of course—though six dollars a week isn’t much wages; but, little as it is, there are plenty of girls to run after it. The proprietor turns off applicants every day.”

Nan’s heart sunk.

“Is it so hard to get a situation to do any kind of work?” she said. “I ask because I thought of trying.”

“You? Well, you will have to push and scramble and work every kind of dodge to get a place in this city. If you ever did anything of the kind, you’d get heartsick over it. Why don’t you marry? That’s better for one of your sort than trying to support yourself.”

So even this stranger advised her to marry. It seemed the only goal held out to her.

“Isn’t that young man that came in with you a beau of

yours? He looked sweet at you, I'm sure, and he's quite swell."

"Quite what? I don't understand!" Nan asked with such evident innocence that the girl smiled.

"You don't know slang?" she said. "I guess you are from the country. I mean he's very nice looking. A girl wouldn't mind marrying such a looking man as that."

She judged him from his good clothes and flesh-and-blood good looks; but even this shop-girl would have taken his measure before she had talked with him half as much as Nan. She would have said to some girl comrade:

"That fellow is a sap-head, for all his swell looks. He's n. g. He'd never earn enough money to pay for his drinks. A girl would carry her geese to a poor market if she married him."

So much for knowing the world.

But poor Nan knew only as she had read of it in old-fashioned romances, and she said to herself: "Edmund must be all that is nice. If I must marry—" and here her thought was drowned in a tide of blushes and a fluttering of the heart—half shuddering fear, half pleasure.

At that instant Edmund came in. He had been to buy tickets for the play that night. For the first time, Nan was to go to the theater. She was to see a play by that William Shakespeare whom she knew only through a big moth-eaten volume in Mrs. De Lacy's collection.

Edmund came toward her, with the tickets in his pocket, and a bouquet of white roses and valley lilies in his hand. Selma had instructed him what to get. Nan looked at him with a new emotion—an emotion that brought a tide of crimson into her cheeks and made her drop the long-lashed lids over her brown eyes. The shop-girl smiled and winked at the floor-walker, who nodded comprehendingly.

"They think we are sweethearts," Edmund whispered, as he put the flowers in her hand. Nan did not know what to say. She felt the mixture of pleasure and vexa-

tion. She took the bouquet and buried her burning face in the flowers. Selma came up at that moment and argued hopefully from her blushes.

Her agitation continued the rest of the afternoon. Her fingers trembled as she dressed to go to the theater. She felt as though something fateful—either good or ill—were impending over her. Surely we are warned by some instinct when we are approaching a crisis in our lives.

Selma was putting some final touches to her toilet, when a card was brought to her. It was for her husband, but she had instructed all cards and letters for him to be brought to her. She glanced at the bit of pasteboard, and the color left her cheeks. The name she read upon it was that of a man who represented the parties that were so anxious to buy the Haggard property. He had called twice before. The first time he had seen Stephen Brent only. Selma, listening on the other side of the half-closed door, had found out the object of his visit. She clinched her hand with furious chagrin, when she heard her husband, in answer to the man's question: "Where is your ward at present?" tell him where Nan could be found.

"Idiot!" she said to him after the capitalist had gone, saying he would call again—for Stephen Brent had given him no satisfactory reply about selling the land. "Why did you tell him where the girl was? Why couldn't you have sense enough to say she was in a convent-school at Paris—or Nova Zembla? He'll go straight down there and see her. He may marry her, if he has no wife, or have his son to marry her. At any rate, she will find out that the land is of value—"

"He would have found out where she was without my telling. He is going to Haggard Creek the day after to-morrow."

"He would not have asked about her if he had thought she was away. He goes down there day after to-morrow, you say. Well, when he goes he will not find her there.

I will go to Haggard Creek to-morrow and take Nan Haggard away."

She had made good her word; she had gone to Haggard Creek and had brought Nan away.

When the capitalist—Wilson by name—came to Miss Rachel's and asked to see Miss Nan Haggard, he learned that she had gone to her guardian's, in the city. He asked some further questions, and found out that Stephen Brent had taken no notice of his ward for ten years, and that his present interest in her was a matter of surprise to Miss Rachel and of suspicion to Mrs. De Lacy. That shrewd old gentlewoman had made a visit to Miss Rachel on this very day—the first she had been known to make for years—on purpose to ask about Nan. She had hoped to get a letter from the girl as soon as she arrived in the city, giving her the street and number of Stephen Brent's house; but no letter had come.

Selma could have told why.

Mrs. De Lacy had quite a talk with Mr. Wilson, and gleaned from him that the Haggard land had recently been prospected for gold, with promising results, and that the party he represented, taking into consideration the fact that there was already a mine upon the land, were prepared to pay a liberal price for it. They had already approached Mr. Brent on the subject, but he had given no positive assurance that he would sell the land. Nan, according to the law of the State, would be of age in two years, and it was right she should be consulted.

"No doubt," said Mr. Wilson, "her guardian has sent for her for that purpose."

Mrs. De Lacy shrugged her shoulders.

"Perhaps," she said, in a doubtful voice; and she sat down at the little table where Nan had been wont to scribble her verses and bits of stories, and wrote the girl a letter, while Mr. Wilson was eating pears from Miss Rachel's orchard—a letter that told her the good news that she was

an heiress, and bid her look to her own interest and get an honest lawyer to conduct the sale of her land, if, in his opinion, the terms were good. Then she gave the name and address of a lawyer whom she had known in his younger days, and believed to be at once shrewd and honest.

This letter she gave to Mr. Wilson, asking him to deliver it to Nan in person. She had taken his measure, and believed him to be a man who could be safely trusted to fulfill a request. He had told her that he would go to Stephen Brent's as soon as he returned to the city.

Mr. Wilson had Mrs. De Lacy's letter in his pocket this moment as he stood in the parlor waiting for a response to the announcement of his presence.

Presently there came in, not the shambling Stephen Brent, with his restless, absent-minded look and uncertain, hesitating speech, but a beautiful woman in evening dress, with a bright, cordial manner.

She excused the non-appearance of her husband. He was indisposed, she said—really quite ill. He was in bed, and unable to see any visitor; but he had commissioned her to say that he had been favorably considering the sale of the land and the mine, and thought they might come to terms. He had consulted with Miss Haggard, and she was willing to sell the land, anxious, indeed, for she was the most conscientious little girl in the world, and she was eager to pay her indebtedness to her guardian.

Mr. Brent had advanced her father money to work Dead Hopes Mine, and had taken a mortgage on the land which had never been closed.

It was impossible to doubt the truth of this communication, coming from a lovely woman who looked you full in the face with eyes as frank as they were bright.

Mr. Wilson asked to see Miss Haggard. He had a letter for her from one of her old friends of Haggard Creek.

“It is, no doubt, Mrs. De Lacy. She was very kind to

our little girl," said Mrs. Brent. "I am sorry Nan is not at home. She has gone into the country for a few days, with a lady friend of mine and her daughter. There is to be a garden-party at my friend's beautiful country place, and afterward a hunt, I believe."

Mr. Wilson looked disappointed.

"I am anxious to meet Miss Haggard," he said. "When will she return, and when can we hope to settle this matter, the sale of the land? The time of business men is money, you know."

"Surely I know that," Selma answered, smiling.

Then she stood in thought for a minute. She was in mortal terror lest Nan should enter the room, though she had given the servant directions she was not to be disturbed in her business interview with the visitor. She said to herself:

"I must act at once. What is to be done must be done quickly. Delay is fatal. Nan Haggard must be married to Edmund, her gold-lands must be sold to her guardian, and she must be on the sea before two days go by. Two days, indeed! The steamer that touches near Lost Island will leave day after to-morrow morning, and Nan Haggard must go in it as Edmund's wife. If she stays here she will know she has been defrauded. She will have meddlesome friends who will help her to expose and prosecute the defrauders."

These considerations passed swiftly through Selma's brain as she stood before the capitalist, who, though a hard, practical man, could not help admiring the grace and charm of the pretty woman in garnet and gold, with the filmy laces hardly veiling her white bosom. In half a minute she had determined what she would do.

"I know how precious time is to you men of large enterprises—the time we women study how to kill gracefully," she said with her winning smile. "So I promise to have Miss Haggard here, and hers and her guardian's mind

fully made up as to the proposition you have put before them, in three days from now. To-day is Tuesday. On Friday morning, if you will call, you will not be put off by any indecision."

He bowed.

"I shall be prompt," he said.

He was putting Mrs. De Lacy's letter in his pocket when she said:

"Oh! the letter. Nan will be glad to get it. I will send it out to her to-day, with some articles she will need."

She held out her hand, and Mr. Wilson, though he had promised to give the letter to no one but Nan, was fain to put it into the pretty pink palm of that white hand with its round jeweled arm. Surely it could make no difference. That old lady had seemed very queer and suspicious, but it was no doubt the cynicism of cranky age.

When the would-be buyer of Dead Hopes Mine had vanished through the door, Mrs. Brent gave a great sigh of relief.

"If that girl had chanced to come in, all would have been lost," she said to herself. Then she tore open Mrs. De Lacy's letter and ran her eye over its contents.

"It is as I thought; she congratulates Nan on being an heiress, and advises her to put herself into the hands of an honest lawyer to see that all is done squarely—more than intimating that we have designs upon her. Mrs. De Lacy, you are a sharp, meddlesome old woman, and here goes your precious warning and advice."

She tore the letter into bits and then went quickly into the dining-room, where she found Nan dressed and looking so pretty with Edmund's gift of white roses on the bosom of her pink-tinted gown, that Selma almost started, and the thought came to her:

"What a sensation in society she would make, with her money and her wild-rose beauty and her bright quick mind! How many men would gather round her! She

could have her choice of the best matches in the land—and I am about to marry her to a drunken half idiot. Well, it can not be helped. If fate had only given me a decent son.”

Instead of remorse there was bitter rebellion in her heart as she looked at Edmund. He was carefully dressed, and so far as looks went he was well enough, but there was no soul in his violet eyes; his mouth, with its shading of silky mustache, was purely sensuous, and a woful lack of intellect was expressed in the forehead, whose disfiguring narrowness was partly hid by the chestnut curls his mother would not allow him to have cut.

He had been drinking, too. His mother knew it at a glance. He was gazing at Nan in a way that would have excited her indignation if she had not been as innocent as a six-year-old child.

Before they went to the theater his mother called him into her room, shut the door, and said, impressively:

“Now, I will tell you what you are to do to-night. In the first place you are not to taste a drop more of whisky, you are not to go out between the acts to get a drink, you are to be quietly attentive to Nan, but to talk very little, and not to comment on the play. If you do she will find out you are a fool. After we come home I will leave you alone with her a little while, and you are then to tell her that you love her far better than the Romeo of the play loved Juliet, only you have not Romeo’s eloquence to paint your love. You are to ask her to marry you, to say that you are going away, and can not bear to leave her, that you will be so lonely on that island, though it is so lovely in the blue, southern sea. Will you remember what I am saying?”

“Of course. I don’t ever forget,” he answered, which was true, for he had the wonderful memory that most half-witted creatures possess. (If you wish to see phenomenal powers of recollecting and repeating with parrot-like glib-

ness, but with no more comprehension than a parrot, go to an idiot asylum.) "But I don't want to marry, and I ain't goin' to that damned old island a foot!" he added.

"You are going to the island. You are going there day after to-morrow, and Nan Haggard is going with you as your wife!"

"I don't want any wife. Cora will do for me."

His mother's eyes gleamed dangerously.

"I see I will have to send you back to the Inebriates' Home," she said. "I will have you taken there to-morrow."

"No, you won't; I'll kill myself first!" he cried. "You promised you wouldn't. I didn't have enough to eat there, and nothing to drink—not a drop. I won't go there. I'll fight the man that tries to take me. You promised I should never go back."

"And you promised to obey me. Now I offer you a lovely girl to have as all your own, and plenty of money. She will have money."

"How much? I thought she was poor?"

"She will have five hundred dollars of her own, and I will give you a thousand more if you will stay on the island for six months quietly, and then take Nan and go to Europe with her. Only six months on the island and you will have that lovely girl, with her sweet, fresh mouth, and her white arms and shoulders. How pretty they are to-night! Will you do what I ask? If not, you know the alternative. You shall have no more money from me, not a cent, and you will be more than apt to find yourself in the Inebriates' Home or the poor-house."

"I'll do as you say; I can't help myself," he answered, doggedly. "But you've got to put down your part of it in black and white—that promise to give me a thousand dollars in six months. I'm not to be cheated," he added, with a look that expressed his idea of his own sharpness.

"You shall have my written promise," his mother an-

swered; "and now let us go. Remember how you are to act to-night. Here is a pearl bracelet, which you will give to Nan, as a birthday gift, tell her—her birthday was only a week ago."

She put the beautiful bracelet—it was taken from her arm, a gift from one of the many men who had loved her—into his hand.

"Try to put it on gracefully," she said, "and tell her as you clasp it that the pearls are lost in the snow of her arm."

He carried out his lesson faithfully. He was really half in love with Nan in his animal fashion. He thought Cora's coarse charms were superior to hers; but there was a novel attraction to his sensuous eye in her virginal, flower-like loveliness. He clasped the bracelet on her pretty arm, and said the little speech his mother had put into his mouth. He put the white-furred opera-cloak about her and fastened it under her chin, smiling down into her face. Then he drew her hand through his arm, and Nan went out with him and Selma, her heart beating lightly with happiness. She was going to see her first play. She was going with the sweetest, kindest woman in the world, and with a handsome young man, whose looks were those of a lover—the first man who had ever made love to her—the first young man, indeed, she had ever spoken to.

CHAPTER XI.

THE BIRD FLUTTERS INTO THE TRAP.

THEY had returned from the theater, and were sitting awhile in the soft-lighted parlor before going upstairs. Nan was full of the play. The tender words of Juliet were thrilling in her ears. For the first time she had heard the words of love spoken and seen impassioned looks and embraces. The exalted sentiment of the play, its romantic

environment, and its tragic close made a deep impression upon her young imagination.

"How happy they would have been if Fate had not darkly frowned between," said Selma. "There is nothing so beautiful as the marriage of two young people who love each other. Juliet was only fifteen; but how ripe and rare was her love!"

She said this as she said almost everything—for a purpose. Then she gathered up her shawl and said she would go to her room and write a letter; and Nan must come to her presently. She had something to say to her; and it was not very late—only eleven.

Nan was left alone with Edmund. The soft light from a rose-shaded lamp fell over her graceful figure, her piquant face and white throat and arms. Her eyes were dreamy with emotions conjured up by the impassioned play.

Something less spiritual than music stirred the pulses of Edmund. In spite of his mother's watchfulness he had contrived to take two drinks out of a flask he had in his pocket. He had taken the last after handing the two women from the carriage. He pretended he had a word to say to the driver. The whisky and the sight of Nan's sweet young loveliness made him forget Selma's admonition to "remember that Nan Haggard was a modest girl, and to be genteel and respectful." He bent over and took her hand as he sat by her, and said—as he had been told—that he loved her more tenderly than ever Romeo loved Juliet, and that he wished he had Romeo's eloquence that he might persuade her to love him in turn; and then he forgot his mother's injunctions, and caught the girl in his arms and kissed her.

It was the kiss of sensuous passion. His lips were hot with the fever of intoxication. Nan saw his look and started up, repelled, terrified. He jumped up and caught her before she could run from the room. She struggled

to free herself; but he held her tightly, and his kisses rained fiercely upon her face.

"I hate you!" she cried; and with all her young strength—nerved by terror and indignation—she pushed him from her and ran from the room.

"I'll have you yet! You shall belong to me! See if you don't!" he called after her, all his indifference merged into keen desire by her resistance.

She ran upstairs and burst into the room where Selma stood at the open door, anxious for the result of the interview. She was dismayed at the sight of Nan's flashing eyes and white, agitated face.

"He has insulted me! I will not forgive him!" cried the girl.

Selma's face darkened. She felt that all her hopes had been swept away. But the next instant she said to herself, "Hate, with a girl young and inexperienced as this, means very little. It may be the prelude to love."

"If he has done anything deliberately to offend you, I will not forgive him myself," she said; and she went quickly out of the room.

She went down-stairs to the parlor where Edmund was standing at the window. She caught him in the act of putting the flask back into his pocket. She sprung upon him like a tigress, wrenched the bottle from his hand, and threw it out of the window.

"Fool!" she hissed in his ear. "You *will* spoil everything! You can not act decently, even for a few days. That was all I asked. Could you not make love like a gentleman? That girl is not Cora Gasker!"

"No; she ain't half as good. Little spit-fire—putting on airs! I'll make her give in. I'll have her now in spite of herself. She can't get the better of me!"

"You?" sneered the mother, in bitter contempt. But her expression changed as she saw a contortion pass over his face. His high color deepened to purple, his eyes were

set in a glassy stare on his mother. Her own eyes softened as she saw it. But she said sharply as she hurriedly unfastened his collar and fanned him: "You'll die in one of these fits, all because of that wretched drink. You won't let it alone."

His glassy eyes stared at her in what seemed to her conscience a dumb rebuke. They seemed to say:

"You taught me to love the drink. I took my first taste of it from your glass."

"There," she said, as he breathed more easily. "It is over now. This is only a slight attack; but it shows you what you may expect. You will not want whisky when you are on the island with Nan. I will make it right with her if you will do as I say. You are all straight again. You must ask Nan's forgiveness. I will go and find out if she will see you."

Nan meanwhile was the prey of conflicting feelings. Her blood still tingled with resentment; but she had begun to wonder if she had not been unjust to Edmund. He had been so kind. He was the son of Selma, who was all that was sweet and noble. He had told her he loved her, and then he had kissed her in a way that somehow made her shrink from him with anger and disgust. But had she not been wrong? Might not Edmund's action have been what was customary and proper in society? Did it not repel her because she was so ignorant of the ways of men! This was no insult perhaps, only the usual way for men to show their love. And it was right to be loved—it was right and good and sweet—all the novels said so—the play to-night said so. If Edmund really loved her—she who was not a heroine, and had not velvet-pansy eyes and spun-gold hair—ought she not to be thankful and happy instead of showing such disdain? Oh! but how rude, how bearish he had been! If he had only taken her hand and kissed that, or pressed one of her curls to his lips as he whispered he loved her, that would have been sweet, like the

love scenes in the romance. Yes, he was rude, and she had a right to be angry. She could not forgive him.

This was her decision when Selma came in.

"I have had a scene with that boy," she said, as she wiped her eyes and dropped into a seat. "I abused him shockingly—I was so angry; but he made me sorry for him. Nan, he is heart-broken because he has acted so. The simpleton loves you, and couldn't restrain himself, that is it. He is just like all other men; but I told him you did not know the ways of men. You had lived out of the world in the high, refined air of dreams and books. He ought to have remembered what I told him. Now he is punished for it—and justly too. He has made you angry—made you hate him—and he shall go away at once!"

"Oh, Mrs. Brent! Oh, Selma!" cried Nan, in consternation, "don't send him off because of me. I forgive him. I don't really hate him. No doubt I was foolish and ignorant. Don't blame him too much!"

"I do blame him. What business has he to fall in love in such a desperate headlong way? I'll cure him. I'll send him to Lost Island in disgrace day after to-morrow. If he is lonely and miserable there, he may blame himself."

"You will send him there because of me? Now you make me miserable. I forgive Edmund. I don't hate him. I was foolish and oversensitive. Let me go and tell him I forgive him, and that you will not send him away!"

"He must go away, not only to cure him of his mad love for you, but because expenses must be cut down. He can do nothing here. On the island he can superintend the cane and fruit fields. You are as one of the family, Nan; and I may tell you that we are on the verge of ruin. We will soon have everything swept from us."

"And you have been buying me so many things. You are supporting me, keeping me in idleness, and—I can do nothing—can not even sell my land unless—"

She stopped, remembering if she had not repelled Edmund; if she had consented to marry him she could sell the land and have some money of her own.

Selma was saying:

"Yes, we shall be bankrupt; and Mr. Brent will have to begin again, wrecked as he is by that hurt."

"That hurt in Dead Hopes Mine! I and my father have been a curse to him," thought Nan, and a passion of regret and distress swept over her. She felt humbled to the dust. What was she that she had scorned Edmund's love? She and her parents had done harm enough in this man's family, now she must wound the hands that had been stretched out to her with kindness and bounty. She burst into tears.

"Let me go down at once and tell Edmund I forgive him," she said. "Do, dear Mrs. Brent!"

"Yes, you can go if you wish. It will relieve him. It will comfort him to think you do not hate him when he has gone. He hoped you might care for him—enough to be his wife—but that can not be, as he now sees."

Nan did not reply to this. She did not know what to say. Her head was whirling, her heart beating tumultuously.

"I will go to him," she said.

"Let me tell him you will see him," returned Selma.

"I am glad; he was so miserable."

She found the "miserable" Edmund asleep on the sofa. She shook him awake.

"Nan is coming," she said. "Do you make out you are distressed and penitent. Say you dare not ask her to forgive you, but you beg her to remember that it was because you loved her so. You were carried away by your love. Lie here—on the sofa—till she comes to the door. Then get up and say what I have told you. After awhile you can take her hand and press it and put it to your lips; but don't dare to kiss her lips. Do you hear?"

"I hear. Plague on her touch-me-not ways! What's a girl made for but to kiss? Am I to ask her to marry me?"

"Say you will be so lonely on the island, and that you will think of her and sigh for her all the time. Tell her the island is a beautiful place—with oranges and bananas, and fields of green cane, and trees full of paroquets, and she could go sailing and fishing with you if she were there."

"It's a nasty, lonesome old snake den, and only that Co—"

"Hush! You will remember all I have said; and that if you do not mind me it will be the worst for you."

She left him, looking back as she went out, and thinking, as she saw him lying on the lounge, pale from his recent slight seizure:

"If only he had as much brains as he has good looks!"

"He is looking for you, Nan. He has taken your hard words terribly to heart."

Nan felt as though she were the culprit, as she glided to the door and saw him looking so pale with his hand over his eyes.

He got up as she came to his side.

"I dare not ask you to forgive me," he began.

She put her hand in his, and said:

"I forgive you with all my heart. I am so sorry you are going away. We will miss you."

"I shall be so lonely on the island. I shall think of you all the time," he said, repeating his lesson. "It's away off, and so lonely. Away from everybody, and from you—that's the worst."

"Isn't it a pretty place?"

"It's a—da—I mean it's a beautiful place. Sea all around it, oranges, bananas, green and red paroquets. If you were there we could gather wild grapes, and fish, and

go sailing, and hunt birds' eggs, and row from one island to another."

"Why, that would be delightful. I would like that."

"Would you? Will you go with me and keep me company? Will you?"

"Yes, indeed," began Nan, "that is, if—"

But he did not wait for what was to follow upon her "if."

"Selma," he called, "Selma, come here, quick!"

She had been standing on the stairs listening anxiously. She entered smiling.

"Good news!" exclaimed Edmund. "Nan has promised to go with me to Lost Island."

Selma went up to her and caught up both her hands.

"Nan, is it true? Have you promised to marry my boy? Dear Nan, you have made me so happy!"

"Marry!" stammered Nan. "I did not say I would marry Edmund—only that I would go with him to the island."

"But you could not go unless you married him. Of course you know that, my dear. So you have really given him a promise to be his wife—and my daughter—"

"I—I would like to think it over until to-morrow. May I not?" asked the poor child, feeling somehow as though she were being pushed over the brink of a precipice.

"Certainly," Selma said, sweetly. "Edmund shall write you a letter and tell his feelings and wishes more fully than he can in talking. He always expresses himself better with his pen. His is one of those reticent natures that words do not come to readily when they feel deeply."

"But you won't disappoint me? You won't go back on your promise? You will go with me to the island?" cried Edmund, with real earnestness, catching her hand and holding it fast.

Nan murmured something. She hardly knew what. She was trembling with opposing emotions.

"I am so glad you have forgiven my boy," Selma whispered as she kissed Nan good-night. The sight of the girl's pale, troubled face ought to have wakened remorse in her breast, but if it did, she stifled it and went to her room to write the letter that Nan found on her plate next morning. Edmund was not there. He had taken a little ride into the country, Selma said, to look after some business.

Nan read the letter that had Edmund's signature to it.

Her first love letter! Every girl remembers that thrilling experience—the reading of her first love letter.

Nan read hers with a sensation of surprise and delight. How beautiful, how passionate and poetic it was! Who would have dreamed that Edmund was capable of such exalted sentiment!

"I have indeed misjudged him," thought Nan. How could she know that her lover could barely write a legible note, could not spell correctly, nor construct an intelligent sentence?

He looked very handsome as he rode up to the gate on horseback that evening. Nan was at the window. He saw her and kissed his hand to her. He came into the house and spoke a few words to his mother in the hall, then went on into the sitting-room to Nan.

She turned round as he approached, and he took her hand.

"Let me see if I can read my answer in your eyes. They look at me too softly to mean 'no,'" he said, repeating the words as Selma had just told him to say.

"You will not let me go to the island by myself?" he went on. "You will go with me?"

"If you want me," she said, blushing and shrinking from him in spite of herself as he drew her to him and kissed her—this time gently—as he had been charged to do.

They were alone a very little while after dinner. His

talk and his manner again jarred upon Nan, and the anxious Selma, coming in, perceived it and carried the girl away.

“This last evening belongs to me,” she said.

Never had this woman been so fascinating as she was to Nan that night. She was sympathetic, tender—even she seemed frank, for she said:

“Nan, my love, I will not hide the truth from you. You deserve a better fate than to marry Edmund. He is poor, and can only offer you his love and a very humble home. You are good and pretty and clever. If you had money you might go into society and make a brilliant match. Edmund is full of faults. How could it be otherwise? He grew up in neglect. I had no time or means to spend upon him. I had to earn my bread and his own. If you can reform him, Nan, and make love work the wonders it is said to do, how happy, how grateful you will make me. I am sorry he has no home to take you to but this lonely island, but so it is. It is a lonely, out-of-the-world place. There are sugar and rice fields upon it, and it is now our only unencumbered property. Mr. Brent sent Edmund upon it several months ago to look after the working of the plantation, but it was lonely for him. He would not stay. It will be different now. He will have you. He could not have a sweeter companion. But you, my little Nan, I am afraid you will be very lonely. I don't intend you shall stay there long. As soon as our tangled money affairs are settled you shall come back out of that wilderness. Can you put up with only Edmund's love and company until then?”

“Can he put up with mine?” answered Nan. “You forget, dear Mrs. Brent, that I have not been used to having anybody to love me and keep me company. I have lived to myself all my life. Nobody ever cared for me but my teacher and Mrs. De Lacy, and she did not care very much, I am afraid, for she has never written to me.

I wish I could have had time to write and beg her to advise me about—this—this marriage.”

Selma's face clouded.

“Old people are not always the best advisers in such matters,” she said. “They are apt to be suspicious and cold-hearted. Have I not your interest at heart as much as Mrs. De Lacy can have?”

“You have not known me as long, and I could not talk to you quite so freely. Oh!” she said, her eyes suddenly filling with tears, “I wish I could have earned my living by doing something. I think it would have been better. Or if I could have sold the Haggard Creek land and got a little money to pay for learning some business that would support me. It seems hard I could not sell it until I married. Can I sell it at once after I am married—to-morrow?”

The girl's lips trembled a little as she said “to-morrow.” Was it possible she should so soon be Edmund's wife?”

Selma hardly noticed it. She was too glad to have the conversation turn upon the sale of the land. She had just been thinking how she should introduce the subject. She said:

“I knew you would not have time to find a purchaser for the land before you left. So I have talked with your guardian about it, and he will buy it from you. He will give you”—Selma hesitated a little and her voice was husky as she said it—“five hundred dollars.”

“Five hundred dollars!” The sum seemed enormous to Nan, who had never had five dollars in her life at a time. Indeed, she had never had a dollar in her possession. Whatever money had been sent for her benefit had been received and laid out by Miss Rachel.

“Oh, Mrs. Brent! The land isn't worth all that money—is it?”

Selma winced. Expecting as she did to reap a harvest

of millions from the girl's heritage, it was hard to look her in the eyes when she asked if it was worth five hundred dollars. But she answered, easily: "Oh, yes, it is, I think. There is timber upon it, and there may be gold after all—who knows?"

Nan shook her head.

"I hope nobody will try to find it. It only brings bad luck," she said; and then she fell to musing at the thought of having five hundred dollars all her own—no, it would be Edmund's also. It would belong to him, as she would belong to him after to-morrow. He had said so when he kissed her that evening, and the words gave her a little fit of terror almost. Recalling them now brought the same feeling. She felt there must be something wrong. She looked piteously at Selma, and then she went and knelt down before her, and looking up into her face, said:

"You must not be vexed. You must not think me ungrateful and cold-hearted—my best, my only friend. I must confess something to you, because it lies heavy on my heart. I am afraid I will not make Edmund happy—because—because I do not think I love him as much as I ought. I can not feel glad to marry him. I shrink from it somehow, and that is not the right way to feel—is it? I know so little, nobody has told me anything, and I have never seen any married people."

Selma changed countenance in spite of herself. Her lips dropped before the earnest, appealing eyes of the child; she felt a pang of remorse; her conscience cried out: "You are committing the sin of sins in ruining the life of this orphan child who trusts you so implicitly."

But the voice of selfish greed and passion was stronger than the voice of conscience. She could not meet the girl's eyes. Her heavy white lids were still downcast as she drew Nan to her, and stroked her hair and brow with her velvet finger-tips.

"My dear Nan," she said, "you know nothing of real

life. You have lived in a world of ideal fancies and notions born of the romances you have read and of your own pure heart. People in this world do not love in the fervent, high-pressure way of those old-fashioned novels, and all girls feel that shrinking when they stand on the brink of marriage. It is the instinct of modesty—nothing more. Such fears do not last. You will recognize your destiny, as every woman does—to love, and to sacrifice for the sake of making the man she loves happier and better. In doing this she finds her own higher happiness. Every woman who loves and marries is in some sense a martyr, but this is her mission; in fulfilling it she makes herself nobler and happier.”

Selma’s sweet voice took a ring of earnest persuasiveness. She really felt what she was saying—and she might have acted upon it had she married a man she loved. She let ambition lead her to sacrifice herself to the decrepit debauché who was Edmund’s father. It had been her mistake and her punishment twice to marry for money, and to find the golden fruit turn to ashes in her grasp.

But little Nan knew nothing of this. She believed Selma Brent to be a good—a grand woman loyally striving to do her duty by a stricken husband and a son who was not all she could wish.

“But I may help to make him so—Selma says I may,” thought Nan; and she felt as though this fine destiny of woman, to reform and ennoble, was opening before her.

“I will try to feel and to do as you think I ought, dearest friend,” she said, returning Selma’s kiss in such a passion of grateful tenderness that the woman’s cheeks tingled with shame at her own unworthiness.

To silence self-rebuke she busied herself in packing Nan’s trunk and in putting into it various little presents—books in their covers, writing materials, drawing-pencils, and paints, studies for pictures—everything she could think of that might amuse her on the island. She would

not let Nan help her; so the girl sat, in a kind of dream, watching Selma's movements.

When all was done, Mrs. Brent came up to her, and said:

"Now you must go to bed and to sleep, my sweet. Do not let any fears or doubts keep you awake. Troubles must come—disappointments must come to every child of earth—but I trust fate will be kind to you, my good, pure child."

She sighed and kissed her trusting victim, feeling herself worse than Judas, as she turned away and left Nan alone with her forebodings.

She went into her son's room. He was partly undressed, and was finishing a fourth bottle of beer. Selma had been obliged to let him have beer. She had refused to give him a cent of money for two days, and he had been unable to get his favorite stimulant.

He had a plate of sausage and biscuit before him, and his mouth full of the same, which he was washing down with beer, when his mother came up and stood looking at him with disgust.

"A charming-looking bridegroom for a nice girl!" she sneered.

"Come now," he grumbled, wiping his dripping mustache. "If you haven't any civiler talk than that for me you'd better stay out of here. You make a mighty fuss over that little white-faced thing. I ain't to blame for marrying her. It's *your* doings."

"She is as far above you as heaven above earth. If you do not treat her as she deserves, I will make you repent it as long as you live, do you hear?"

She caught his arm and shook it fiercely as she looked down at him.

"What's come over you?" he whimpered, frightened at her look. "Who says I ain't going to treat the girl well. I'll treat her better'n she's been used to. She's only a little country-raised thing."

“You have promised not to get drunk and act like a beast, to be kind and attentive to Nan, and faithful to her, if you know what faithfulness means. You are to take up with no hussies like Cora Gasker. If I hear of her being on that island, you’ll get no thousand dollars from me.”

“I’ve got your promise in black and white for that. I was too smart for you there, and there wasn’t a word in it about Cora.”

“It was stipulated in the writing that you should be kind and faithful to your wife.”

“I’ll be good enough to her. I’ll show her though I’ll do as I please with her when she is mine. I’ll break down all her skittish, keep-your-distance airs. I’ll let her know who she belongs to.”

The look of brutish gloating in his soulless eyes made Selma’s blood burn with disgust. She went out hastily.

“I am a wicked wretch,” she said to herself. “I wish I had never begun this. It sickens me to the heart. How can I help it! This is my last throw for fortune and for love. I have had cruel failure every time I have tried to rise. This is the third time. There is luck in the odd number. The man I love, as I never loved in my foolish youth, would marry me if I were free and had money. Death will set me free in a little while, and a single bold move will give me money—more than I have dreamed of. Shall I shirk from this move because of weak scruples about its being right? There is no absolute right. Success is to the strong; that is what nature teaches. The hawk preys on the dove; that is according to nature’s laws. I don’t want to stick my talons deep into this little dove. I am sorry for her, but I am not defrauding her so much. She never knew what it was to have money. Poverty won’t hurt her as it would hurt me. But to marry Edmund! Yes, that is horrible! Why was such a beast given to me instead of a son I could have been proud of, one that would make that sweet girl happy? Well, there must always be

a victim. I don't mean it shall be me if I can help it. I am in the whirlpool of circumstances. It is not I to be blamed, it is Fate."

She was walking about the room with a swift, gliding step. She stopped before a table and picked up a newspaper.

"If it had not been for that paragraph my heart would have failed me to-night. I could not have betrayed that motherless child. But I can not give him up. I will yet be the wife of Paul Olmstead."

She opened the paper and glanced down one of the columns. She set her teeth and uttered an exclamation of anger as she crumpled the paper in her hand and flung it on the floor.

She caught up a pen and drew a sheet of paper to her, and wrote rapidly:

"I read among the *on dits* of a daily paper that the Hon. Paul Olmstead is very attentive to the heiress—Miss Vernon C——. This may be only gossip. The Hon. Paul Olmstead has not forgotten his oath of fidelity to another woman, nor the fact that certain documents in the hands of that woman would, if made public, seriously interfere with his prospects for re-election."

She had begun to fold this sheet when she heard a groan in the room across the hall. She took up a candle and stepped lightly across the passage, and entered her husband's room, shading the candle with her hand as she crept to the side of the bed where he lay asleep. She bent down and looked closely at his face. It was very white and haggard, with deep lines around the mouth.

"I can see it," she said to herself. "I can see the change Doctor Colton spoke of. The doctor declares he can not live longer than three months. Three months! It is not long to wait."

She went back into her own room, and unfolding the letter she had written, added this postscript:

“Wait for me a few months longer, Paul, my beloved. In a little while I will be free, *and rich*—rich enough to carry out your ambitious plans. Only wait and be true—as I am true.”

And at this very moment Nan was kneeling, in her white night-gown, by the bed and looking out at the stars she could see through her chamber window, while she prayed:

“Father! mother! look down from heaven and help me! If I am doing right, put these doubts and this shrinking from my heart; and if the step I am going to take is wrong, save me from it—save me, my sweet guardian angels!”

CHAPTER XII.

A QUEER MARRIAGE.

BUT Nan's guardian angels did not interpose to prevent her marriage. It took place the next morning at nine o'clock, as Selma had willed it should, and half an hour later the bride signed away her birthright—that heritage of rocky acres which she believed to be worth so little—that she felt as though she was defrauding her guardian—that ghostly, trembling old man who gave her away at her marriage, sitting in his arm-chair, but did not once look at her while the ceremony went on.

If she could have interpreted the voiceless muttering of his pallid lips, they would have been these broken words:

“Anabel's child—given to him—that drunken fool! This crime is worse than that other. Anabel's child robbed of her rights! Anabel, you can never forgive—God can never forgive!”

She could not hear this unuttered revelation, nor could

she know of the scene between the husband and wife—such only in name—that had taken place that morning—how the old man had refused to be present or to take part in what he called the “black work” of the next few hours—how Selma had to persuade with all her arts, and finally to threaten, and to pour down him, with the aid of Edmund, the drug that helped to make him passive under her will.

She found need to administer some of the same nerve-deadener to Nan this morning. The girl had passed an almost sleepless night, and she was trembling in every limb. She burst into tears when Selma came in and spoke to her. She was sitting in her dressing-gown, looking pale and ill. Forebodings and shuddering repulsions possessed her, and she caught Selma’s hand, and said, wildly:

“Let me go out and earn my living. I am young and strong; I can work as a servant. I can do anything. I am not fit to be married; I do not feel like a wife.”

“It is too late,” Selma returned, looking down at the child that clung to her knees—“it is too late. The license has been bought, the magistrate and the witnesses will soon be here; everybody will blame and ridicule your childish changeableness. It is too serious a matter for trifling and caprice. You have given Edmund your promise; you have declared your intention to me and to your guardian. It is not like you to go back on your word; I thought you were more of a woman.”

“Alas! I am only a child—I feel it. I am weak, and I don’t know what is good for me. Forgive me, dear Mrs. Brent.”

“You are just timid and nervous—like all young girls about to be married. I will bring you a cordial—that will strengthen your nerves.”

The “cordial” she brought had the effect of stupefying the unhappy girl and paralyzing her will. Without a word more of protest she stood up and let herself be dressed for

the ceremony in a dark traveling-gown and hat. She let Selma remove with rose-water and powder the traces of tears, and even put a touch of rouge on her pale cheeks to prevent the dark rings under her eyes from showing.

She went through the short ceremony with the same quiet passiveness. The magistrate thought he had never seen so self-possessed a bride—or was she stupid? If so, she was matched by her bridegroom, thought the old lawyer, who alone, with Stephen Brent and his wife, were witnesses of the marriage. He had always transacted Mrs. Brent's business, and was partially her confidant, as well as her platonic admirer. He felt sure she was at the bottom of this transaction, but it was not his place to show any sign. It was his part to stand by his lovely client, whose ambition and talent for scheming he knew. He was perfectly aware, too, that Edmund Hoyt was a drunkard, and half-witted, though such was the young man's memory and his parrot-like facility for repeating what he caught from others, or was told to say, that he would pass as merely eccentric and an oddity among people who saw him only a short time. He could even assume a certain owl-like dignity; and Selma often said, if he would keep his mouth shut and let liquor alone, that people would make the mistake of supposing he had good sense, as he surely had good looks.

He chose to be very dignified on this occasion. He looked at pale little Nan and felt that he was sacrificed by his mother. He was too good for a green country girl. She had not half the "go" in her that Cora had. But she had white shoulders and a pretty figure, and a sweet-looking mouth for kisses, and she was now going to belong to him, and he would put down her "touch-me-not airs"—that was one consoling thought. Another was that he would have some money. Selma had promised to give him a hundred dollars of the sum he would receive as Nan's husband and legal agent when she was paid for her

land. He had never had so much money in his possession at a time. Selma had doled out the dollars to him sparingly enough, knowing how they would be spent. He congratulated himself on the sharpness he had shown in outwitting his mother in the whisky matter. He had ordered a large case of his favorite drink to be sent to the steamer this morning, payable on delivery. With a part of Nan's hundred dollars he could settle the bill. The rest of the money his mother had insisted on giving to Nan, whom she charged to keep it in her own possession.

Such were the thoughts and feelings of the man into whose keeping was given this delicate-souled girl, with her gifted mind and her pure and tender heart.

There was in her the making of a noble woman. Her plastic nature was capable of being molded to fine ends, but into what hands had it been given?

The vessel would leave at eleven. So after a breakfast, which nobody eat except Edmund, the lawyer and magistrate, the farewells were said, and the newly wedded pair drove away.

Then it was noticed that Stephen Brent had fallen down in a faint. When she went up to him to say good-bye, Nan, moved by pity at the sight of his haggard, stricken face, had bent down to kiss him, with a sudden sense that he was the only link between her and her dead parents—the only semblance of father or guardian she had known. But he drew back and put up his shaky hand.

“Don't!” he muttered. “Don't kiss me. I couldn't stand it. I—”

Selma came up quickly, with a whispered word to Nan, and a touch of the hand on her husband's arm. That touch looked as though it were a gesture of soothing, but the old lawyer knew better.

“The cat!” he said to himself, with a smile. “The feline creature—with her velvet-sheathed claws! Handsome leopardess that she is, she hasn't changed her spots

since I knew her first, an ambitious adventuress; as poor as she was pretty. She's poor still, though the crash hasn't quite come; but she's got some scheme in her subtle brain for getting on her feet again. Yes, cat-like, she always falls on her feet. There's something under this queer marriage, and that quick, trumped-up sale and transfer of the girl's estate to Brent. I'll get it all out of her, deep as she is. She will have to get me to help her through."

Stephen Brent was restored to consciousness and put to bed.

"It's odd if he ever rises from it," said his physician to Mrs. Brent. He was well aware his words carried no pang to her heart. She heard him with the look of concern that decency required, but in her busy brain she was revolving the question whether she should sell the Haggard Creek lands to the company next day, or whether she should only allow them to purchase a share in the mine. In a few months she felt sure—before the next Congress should close in Washington—she would be free—the rich and beautiful widow of Stephen Brent. She would be at the capital—in some quiet eddy of the social whirl, as became her weeds—and the Hon. Paul Olmstead would be at her feet.

CHAPTER XIII.

ON SHIPBOARD.—BRIDE AND GROOM.—A QUEER WEDDING JOURNEY.

NAN was on deck, enjoying the new experience of being on board a vessel—of being borne on the heaving bosom of that ocean she had so often read of and pictured. She had seen it from the quay once or twice during the few days she had been in the city, but this was the first time she had been upon the water.

The novelty of the experience and the beauty of the scene made her forget herself for awhile. All around her

stretched the expanse of blue-green water sparkling in the sun, with here and there a wreath of smoke from a proudly riding steamer, or a cloud of canvas from some large ship, or a silvery gleam, as of a great bird's wing, of a single sail against the blue sky.

Yonder was a long, green island, and yonder in the mellow distance the undulating coast-line. On a small island near the coast stood a tall, white light-house—the guardian giant whose bright eye sleeps in the day—and from a sharp elbow of land rose a gray stone fort. Nan thought it must be a castle; it looked like the pictures of castles. She ventured to ask Edmund, who stood near her smoking a cigar he had bought at the bar below after swallowing the “three fingers” he had called for. The stimulant was working in his weak brain, and he had assumed the consequential air which with him was the sign of incipient drunkenness. He thought all the passengers were observing him. Some of them must know him to be the stepson of the (reputedly) rich Stephen Brent. Did they know, too, that he was just married to this nicely dressed girl at his side, and that his pocket-book was stuffed full of ten-dollar bills?

He was rather proud of his bride. True, she was not his ideal of a fine girl. She wasn't a stunner. She didn't have snapping black eyes and red cheeks, and walk and talk with a dash, and say pert, slangy things, and giggle and ogle, as did the beer-garden divinities he had bowed to; but she was a nice girl—Selma said so, and Selma knew all about gentility. He'd back her on that. But, in spite of Selma's praise, the fact remained that Nan was a country girl, and he felt his superiority.

“Castles?” he said. “Why, there ain't any castles, only in fairy-tales! That's a fact. Don't stare around so, Nan; people will know you've never been on the water before. They're looking at you now as though they thought you were green.”

Nan's enjoyment of the lovely prospect was dashed at once. She stole a glance, for the first time, at the "people" on deck. She colored vividly as she saw that two pairs of eyes were, as Edmund said, turned upon her. She had too humble an opinion of herself to see that they were looking at her with pleased interest, admiring the slender grace of her figure and her bright, child-like enjoyment of the scene.

They stood not far from her, those two, and they were objects of unusual attraction themselves. One was a man of thirty or more, with a distinguished-looking air, finely chiseled features, grave eyes, gray in color, and a mouth, at once firm and tender in expression, shaded by a brown mustache. A tinge of melancholy, half cynical, half kindly, overspread his face. The kindly look predominated when he spoke to his companion—a young man, a mere boy indeed—dark, beardless, with dark-brown curling hair and features of almost girlish beauty, rather haughty and imperious in their expression, like a pretty spoiled child.

But his smooth cheek was hollow and the color upon it had a feverish brightness. His eyes were also too brilliant for health, and his graceful figure was somewhat emaciated. He was all life and animation, however. He talked eagerly to the elder man, as he half leaned against him, while they stood watching the vessel cut her way out of the bay into the open sea.

Presently the elder man stepped across the deck and brought a chair.

"Sit down, Hartley. You will tire yourself standing," he said.

The young man was about to obey, when he suddenly turned to Nan, who was standing (Edmund had not thought to bring her a seat), and said:

"Will you not take this chair?" At the same time he shot a glance of rebuke at the stolid, self-satisfied companion of this pretty girl.

“Must be her brother,” he thought, “though he doesn’t look like her a bit. He’s too indifferent to be a sweetheart.”

Nan declined the seat with pretty thanks, but Hartley left it beside her, notwithstanding his grave companion brought another chair, and made him sit down in it while he leaned upon the back.

Edmund had not at all seen the rebuke conveyed in the glance of the boy’s bright, scornful eyes. He smoked on composedly, saying a few words now and then to Nan, and then went below and got another drink. While he was gone Nan availed herself of the chair that had been offered her, and when he came back, he placed another seat quite close to her and sat down. His breath came to her, hot and strong with liquor, and she looked at him and suddenly remembered that Selma had warned her that drink was his besetting sin and begged her to use her influence to get him to break off the habit.

She had never known a man who drank. She had only known of one such case in the quiet and strait-laced neighborhood of Haggard Creek. She had seen this man fall from his wagon to the ground when drunk, and she had heard of his beating his wife and trying to kill one of his neighbors. He had been turned out of the church and ostracised in the little community.

When Selma spoke to her of Edmund’s propensity “to take too much stimulants now and then,” she had not at all imagined the extent of this propensity. She did not in the least connect Edmund’s habit with that of shabby and grizzled Farmer Blake.

But when she caught the strong smell of whisky and turned to him and saw his flushed face and his eyes that were taking on the glazed, brutish look of intoxication, her heart sunk within her.

“Edmund,” she said, earnestly, “please don’t drink

any strong liquor. It will do you harm. I wish you would promise me not to drink at all."

"Come, now," he said, "don't go to scolding and nagging at me. Selma put that into your head. It's just like her to do it. I won't stand it from you. You've got to be sweet to me, to love me, and to do all I want you to. That's what little wives have got to do."

He put his arm around her shoulders and leaned his head close to hers as he spoke. Involuntarily she drew back. He frowned.

"What the dickens are you scared of?" he said, petulantly. "It's time to leave off such airs."

"I'm not scared," she said; but in truth something akin to terror stirred in her heart as she met his look. Involuntarily she contrasted his face with the faces of the two young men who sat near them—those finely cut, refined faces lit with the light of intelligence. The misgiving came to her that Edmund Hoyt was not a fair type of the young manhood there was in the world. There were men who looked fit to be his masters. That was one standing there, the tall, grave-looking man with the kindly yet melancholy and gently cynical eyes. She had caught his glance—instantly withdrawn—just now when Edmund spoke to her so harshly because she drew away from his embrace. There was a puzzled, wondering expression in the look. She would have understood it if she could have heard the youthful Hartley say:

"What the mischief can that fellow be to that nice little girl? She is disgusted with him, and no wonder. He is half drunk as well as half a fool."

Edmund put his feet on the railing of the deck, lighted another cigar, and smoked away in offended silence. Nan stole a look at him—the man she belonged to—her legal master and lord, according to what she had been taught to believe was the wife's duty to her husband. She felt that she must be very wicked, for she did not love this man,

she could not bear him to come near her. The glamour that Selma had managed to throw around him by her artful interpretation of all he said and did no longer existed. He was no longer under any restraint. He looked and acted his real self—his natural grossness and lack of intelligence increased by the stultifying effect of the whisky he had imbibed so freely.

Nan was horrified at the feelings she found she was entertaining for her husband. She tried to reason herself out of them. It was because she was not accustomed to him, she said to herself. All girls felt this shrinking from their husbands when they were newly married. Selma said so. And he was not bad looking. He had handsome features and blue eyes and chestnut hair. His manners were not refined, not like the manners of the two men who still sat near them—too near, for the contrast was sharp and bitter to Nan; but he would improve. She could help him to reform; his mother had told her she might do Edmund great good. She would try. It was her duty. If only he would not come so close to her and look at her as he did awhile ago.

She began to talk to him, prattling on about the beauty of the sea, and her delight at watching the waves sparkling, heaving like living things joying in the sunshine. A large steamship was coming toward them, breasting the waves with such ease and grace that Nan forgot her troubles in the pleasure it gave her to watch the movements of the ship.

With her eyes all a-sparkle she repeated:

“ ‘ I saw him beat the surges under him
And ride upon their backs. He trod the waters,
Whose enmity he flung aside, and breasted
Each wave that met him.’ ”

“ What’s all that? ” muttered Edmund, looking at her with the superior dignity of a half-drunken man.

Nan colored, and said:

"It is about Prince Ferdinand's swimming, but the ship, as she 'trod the waters,' put me in mind of it. It's in Shakespeare's play, 'The Tempest,' you remember."

"Where did you see that acted? You were never inside a theater until I took you," he said.

"I did not see it played, I read it."

"Read it?" he returned. "Shakespeare isn't to be read; it's only to be played. It's nothing but a string of questions and answers."

Nan was disconcerted. She wondered if this was the estimate people in the world put upon her beloved Shakespeare.

She heard a laugh behind her—a short burst of gleeful ridicule. Edmund heard it too. He turned around. He was in the mood to pick a quarrel.

"What are you laughing at, jackanapes?" he demanded, looking at the young man with what he imagined to be great dignity.

"I was laughing at the conceited ignorance of a booby that said Shakespeare was not to be read," answered Hartley.

"If you laugh at me again I'll pitch you over this railing," said burly Edmund, glowering at the slight, boyish figure.

"Come on and try it," cried the youth, jumping to his feet and making a step toward Edmund. "Loose my arm, Thorne."

But Cyril Thorne kept a tight hold of the slender arm he had caught, and drew the boy back with force.

Edmund had seemed in no hurry to meet the challenge.

"It was none of your business to laugh. Nobody was talking to you," he growled.

"That is true," said Thorne, quietly. "Hartley, you had no business to listen to or comment on a remark that was not addressed to you. You owe the lady at least an apology."

"I would not hurt *her* feelings for anything," said the boy, turning his beautiful dark eyes upon Nan's distressed, half-frightened face. "I am sorry, for her sake, that I laughed; but really I couldn't help it."

"It's well you apologized," Edmund muttered.

He resumed his seat.

Thorne drew his young companion to the other side of the deck.

"Our proximity embarrasses the girl," he said. "One can see she is mortified to death."

"What on earth is she doing in company with that lout?" Hartley queried, for the second time. "What can she be to him? Surely not married to him?"

"I think not. She looks like a child. And she is so timid and seems hardly acquainted with him. If they are married this must be their bridal-tour—their honey-moon."

"For Heaven's sake don't talk of a honey-moon in connection with that pair. It's horrid mockery!" cried Hartley. "I don't believe they are married. It's too absurd."

"If it is true there must be some underhand work in the business," Thorne said, looking across at the girl's clouded young face, "and I am thoroughly sorry for her."

Edmund, meanwhile, was feeling complacent.

"I've backed that dude out," he said, putting up his feet on the railing and throwing himself back in his seat. "I've run the pair of them. They saw I wasn't to be fooled with. Were you scared, little wife? You stick to me and you'll be all right."

He put his arm around her and drew her close to him. She was silent and passive, except for an inward shrinking. She did not want to attract any more notice to them.

Presently she said:

"I have a new magazine; would you like me to read to you?"

"Not now. You can read me to sleep in our state-

room after dinner. I wish they'd hurry it up. I'm as hungry as a bear. What's that you've got, the *Century*?—that's poor stuff. There no fun in that. I've got a book in my pocket worth a dozen of it."

He pulled out a small dime novel of the blood and thunder kind, with a sensational red and yellow wood-cut on the cover.

"This is the 'Life of Billy Pate, the Terror of the West,' " he said. "Killed no end of men, and broke jail ten times. He was shot at last, when they were trying to take him—five to one—after he'd hurt three of 'em. There's the picture where he was saved by his girl, Sally Quin. She dressed in boy's clothes, and fooled the officers—put 'em on the wrong scent. Plucky girl, she was—handsome, too. She's got an arm and an ankle for you! I know a girl that looks like her, and has got her spunk, every bit."

A shade of regret stole over his face. He brightened up again as his eyes fell upon two men, with common-looking faces, dressed in flashy plaid suits. They had just come up on deck, and they lounged against the railing near by and stared at Nan.

"Oh, I say, there's Brun and Wilson—two fellows I know. Smartest hands at poker you ever saw. They're going down to Panama to rake in the money. They won't believe I'm married. I'll show 'em—now," and with a wink at the men, he pulled Nan to him and kissed her. The men laughed coarsely.

The girl's cheeks flamed, and she said, half sobbing:

"Don't do that again. Oh, I am ashamed—I am ashamed of you!"

"I am ashamed of *you*," he returned. "Don't know your place as a wife—putting on skittish ways now, and we married. I'll kiss you when and where I please. Don't you belong to me? You've promised to honor and obey *me*."

Yes, she had so promised, and she belonged to him—to Edmund Hoyt—who looked so, who talked with such utter want of refined feeling, who smelled so of whisky and tobacco. How had she been so blind, so deceived as to marry him? It was Selma's art that had blinded her. She felt it now. She began to see the treachery that had made her its victim.

She sat in piteous misery. Involuntarily her look went once across to where the tall stranger and his boyish charge were sitting. Her eyes met his, and her face changed, but not with embarrassment. The look in those grave, gray eyes was one of sympathy and pitying interest. It had a quieting effect upon her.

"I don't think you care for my company," Edmund said, rising and throwing his half-smoked cigar over the railing; "so I'll go below. When dinner's ready I'll come for you."

But he did not come. The bell rang for the two-o'clock dinner, and the passengers who were on deck went down—all but Cyril and Hartley. They lingered to see if the man would come for the girl, who seemed to be under his protection.

"Let's ask her to go down with us," Hartley said; but the elder man shook his head.

"It might mortify her. She is sensitive—you can see that in her face. It would be better to send the purser."

They went down, and Nan, though she had not tasted breakfast, and had eaten hardly anything the day before, was left sitting forlornly, miserable little bride that she was, gazing out over the heaving water.

She had been sitting so only a few minutes when the purser of the boat—a quiet, nice-looking, middle-aged man—came to her and asked in a respectful, matter-of-fact way if she would not go down to dinner.

She knew by his cap and dress that he was an officer of

the boat, so she only hesitated an instant; then, thanking him, she rose and went down with him to the cabin, where he seated her by his side and had her plate served, telling her pleasantly that she had better eat heartily and make the best of the smooth sea, as they might look for rougher water before long. Hitherto the sea had been like glass.

“And you don’t look like an old sailor,” he added.

She told him it was the first time she had ever been on a ship. The dinner was so excellent and the officer so kindly attentive that Nan’s appetite came to her. It was some time before she noticed, sitting at a small side-table in a corner, Edmund and some others, among them the two men in plaid clothes. They were eating in a hoggish fashion, talking and drinking wine. Edmund’s face was very red, and his hair in bristly disorder. Nan once more contrasted that face with the one beside her, and with others she saw at the table—notably the high-bred features of Cyril and the handsome, brilliant face of his young comrade. Oh, how ignorant she had been to imagine that all men were like Edmund Hoyt! If she had only known—if she had not been deceived by Selma! But it was too late; she was his wife—he was her master. She must submit to be kissed by that mouth, whose sensual expression made her turn sick as she watched him.

She could eat no more. Her kindly attendant thought it was a sudden qualm of seasickness, and hastened to conduct her on deck again, and to give her a pleasant seat sheltered from the sun, where she could have plenty of breeze.

She was not in the least seasick. There was scarcely any motion in the vessel; the sea was almost as calm as a lake on a still day. The sky was marbled with white clouds, and there was a soft, purplish haze hanging over the horizon. Nan could see the coast in the distance—an undulating, blue-green line. Some porpoises were tumbling in the water not far from the ship, and a distant sail

and a flock of sea-gulls near at hand helped to vary the monotony of blue sky and deep blue sea.

Nan, with her child-like buoyancy of spirits, was looking at the prospect with keen enjoyment, forgetting her troubles, when a hand fell heavily on her shoulder. She turned quickly, and saw her newly made lord and master.

Edmund Hoyt was now fully under the influence of liquor. His eyes, blood-shot and glassy, protruded in his inflamed face; their idiotic, animal look made her gasp with terror as he thrust his face close to hers. The sickening scent of whisky came strong upon his hot breath.

"Come," he said, in a thick voice, "letch go down to our state-room; I want to lie down, and I want you to rub my head. Come." He took hold of her about the waist. "Come, along, swheety; you b'longst to me now, you know."

She forgot her dread of drawing upon her the notice of the passengers. She could only feel an overpowering sense of terror and repugnance at the thought of being alone with this drunken, beast-like creature. The look in his eyes filled her with shuddering horror. She sprung back, jerking herself from his hold.

"I don't want to go below—I will not go!" she said, in a low, determined voice.

His face darkened; he uttered an oath.

"I'll show you!" he exclaimed, and clutched her again. She struggled for a second in his grasp.

Hartley Lytton could stand it no longer. He had been sitting not far from Nan, pretending to read, but in reality stealing furtive glances at her unconscious face. He threw down the book and sprung to his feet when Edmund seized Nan the second time.

"Loose her, you drunken brute!" he said, and struck Hoyt's arm with all the force of his slender muscles.

The drunken brute turned upon him savagely.

"It's you, you meddlesome pup! I'll pound you into a jelly!" he cried, and struck at Hartley with fury.

The blow did not fall. His arm was caught and held as in a vise. He looked up into the stern, set face of Cyril, and his eyes fell. He cowered under the withering look of the man he felt was his master. He felt, too, the strength of the sinewy grasp that now held both his arms. He swayed and staggered for an instant, his red face growing purple and contorted, then he tumbled down in a heap, and lay there breathing stertorously.

Nan forgot her personal terror and mortification in a new dread.

"What is the matter with him? Is he hurt, is he dying?" she asked, as she hung over him and saw his frightful, convulsed face.

Cyril reassured her.

"He is not dying," he said. "He has a kind of fit. It will pass off. I will have him taken below. Don't be troubled; it is not serious."

Hoyt was carried below. Cyril followed, giving his assistance to Nan, who was sobbing hysterically. He put her in charge of the stewardess, again begging her to be composed.

"I assure you there is no need to be apprehensive," he said. "The attack is not dangerous. I imagine he has had such seizures before. I am a physician, and I will do all I can for him. Give her a glass of wine and get her to lie down," he said to the motherly colored stewardess, slipping a dollar into her palm.

CHAPTER XIV.

It was the second day out at sea. Nan lay on the narrow berth of her state-room, weak from wretchedness and seasickness, for the vessel had encountered some rough water.

Edmund was better. The paroxysm had passed off, leaving him stupid and half comatose. For awhile he had writhed in strong convulsions, throwing his attendants from him with violence.

A blow from his heavy fist had chanced to strike poor, little, frightened Nan, who had tried to come to his side, thinking it was her place as his wife. She staggered back, and Dr. Thorne caught her as she was falling.

He led her out of the state-room.

"This is no place for you," he said. "I assure you your—your—husband is in no danger. He shall be well attended to. Here, stewardess, take this lady to her room, and remain with her until she feels better."

He gave Nan into the hands of a fat, comfortable-looking old colored woman with a face full of kindness and dignified importance.

"I will bring or send you word presently how the young man is," he said to Nan as he left her.

An hour later a servant brought her a card on which was written:

"He is doing well. The violent stage is past. He is sleeping under the influence of an opiate. Go to bed and rest content that he will lack for nothing."

Nan lay down but did not go to sleep. She felt she had been deceived and betrayed. She could see no way to escape from the trap in which she had fallen. Her thoughts simply beat themselves against the bars of circumstance, like the wings of a caged bird. She was this man's wife. She had sworn to love and cherish and cleave to him through good and ill.

True, she had been deceived into thinking he was far other than she had found him to be. It was because she knew nothing of the world, nothing of men or of women either, she thought, with a bitter sense of Selma's treachery. She must pay the penalty of her ignorance. There was no help for her now. She was Edmund's wife

—the wife of the brutish creature whose look she shuddered to remember. She could not break her vow, that would be a sin. She must do her duty as a wife. She must stay with him—live all the days of her life in his companionship.

“Oh, God! I can not! Let me die! Death is better!” sobbed the wretched girl, rising from the bed, as soon as the state-room door had closed behind the kind but officious old stewardess, and flinging herself on her knees beside her berth in an agony of despair.

Sleeplessness and misery made her feel too sick to get up in the morning. They were in rough water, too, and seasickness was added to her other troubles. She could not taste the breakfast that the stewardess brought to her. She drank a little tea, and listened to the message the doctor had sent—that Edmund was doing well, was needing nothing.

A little later he sent a glass of iced lemonade that Nan found refreshing.

About noon she had fallen asleep for the first time, when one of the cabin boys knocked at her door and roused her with the message that her husband wanted her to come to him “right away.”

She rose at once; her head throbbed with pain and swam round giddily as she hurriedly arranged her dress and followed the boy to Edmund’s state-room. A sickening odor of whisky greeted her as she opened the door. Edmund was sitting up in bed, undressed, and with his hair in disorder around his flushed and dissolute-looking face. He had been drinking, having, as Nan found afterward, bribed the boy to bring him a bottle of whisky, contrary to the doctor’s orders.

“You’re a pretty wife to run off and leave your sick husband for strange people to nurse,” he began, as soon as Nan came into the room.

“The doctor said there was no need of my—”

"Damn the doctor!" he interrupted. "He's a fool, anyhow. He ain't the ship's surgeon. The cabin boy said so. He's some city swell acting as the ship's doctor. He'd better quit meddling with my business. Sit down there and bathe my head. Give me some water. I'm burnin' up inside."

Nan did as she was told. She was glad to do any service for him. It relieved her conscience, that rebuked her for the shuddering disgust she felt for him. But as she sat there and looked at him and listened to his coarse, boorish utterances, she grew sick in heart and body. She could barely keep from falling out of her seat.

He continued to upbraid her for neglecting him.

"There's plenty of girls would be glad to nurse me, and kiss me too. I know one that kisses sweet as pie," he said. "Give me that plug of tobacco out of my pocket. Selma wouldn't let me chew while I was courtin' you, but now I've got you I'll do what pleases me."

He twisted a piece of tobacco from the plug she gave him and began to chew it as he lay, the juice running out of the corner of his mouth, when at last, to Nan's infinite relief, he fell asleep.

She wiped his mouth with a damp cloth and then sat still, feeling too weak to rise, watching him and listening to his heavy breathing.

The door opened and Dr. Thorne entered. He looked surprised and worried when he saw her.

"You are not fit to play nurse here," he said. "You are more in need of being nursed yourself. I suppose he sent for you while I was off attending to a sick passenger—the surgeon had fever and was left behind at St. Luke's Island last trip, and I am acting in his place until we reach the island. I left a man here with Mr. Hoyt. He has bribed him to bring him whisky, I see. He must have liquor of his own on board. They would not send it from the bar after my order that he should not have it."

Edmund was muttering as he turned his head about. At first his mutterings were incoherent, but presently he said, aloud:

“Come here, Cora, come and kiss me. I don’t love her best. I love you. You’re my own girl. I married her because—because Selma made me.”

Nan rose to her feet. A sense of the wrong that had been done her, of the full wretchedness of her fate, came upon her like a blow. This man did not even love her. He cared for another woman—in the coarse way that alone he was capable of loving. Selma had made him marry her. Selma had deceived her and ruined her life—Selma, whom she had loved and trusted and believed to be her friend.

She was white to the lips. She did not remember Cyril’s presence. She uttered a cry of pain—such a cry as a snared creature might utter when it feels the steel teeth of the trap close on its flesh.

Cyril took her hand and drew it through his arm.

“Come out of this,” he said. “Come up on deck and get some fresh air. We are in nearly smooth water again.”

He half supported her up the stairs to the deck. It was late in the afternoon. The sun was veiled by light clouds. There was no wind, only a light breeze that just ruffled the water. It was balmy and refreshing.

A number of the passengers were seated in chairs under the awning, enjoying its coolness while they read or talked, or silently looked out at the sea and sky, which was now all there was to be seen.

Hartley was sitting off to himself with his violin, his leg thrown, boy-like, over the arm of the chair, his eyes gazing dreamily out as he drew the bow of the violin listlessly across the instrument.

He jumped up as he saw Dr. Thorne coming with Nan, and brought the arm-chair forward for her seat.

Dr. Thorne settled her comfortably in it apart from the other passengers. Then he went below and brought up a glass of iced orangeade, which he got her to drink.

"Play something, Hartley," he said, and the young man seated himself on a camp-stool and began to play. Sweeter music, Nan thought, she had never heard. The instrument seemed to speak to her in a voice of soothing. The delicate, quivering, long drawn-out notes had the cadence of human feeling, passion, tenderness, sympathy.

As she listened and looked out over the wide, gently heaving sea she grew calmer, and when Hartley ceased playing she asked where they were now in their ocean journey and how far the vessel had still to go.

"We will soon be under semi-tropic skies," Dr. Thorne answered. "The vessel will not reach Panama for several days yet, but we will get to St. Luke's Island to-morrow, where some of the passengers and freight are to be put ashore. Is that your journey's end?"

"I am going to Lost Island; I do not know where that is," answered Nan.

"Lost Island!" he echoed. His look and tone expressed strong surprise.

"Do you know anything about the island?" she asked.

"It is ten miles from St. Luke's. The ship does not touch there. You will have to get a boat to take you to it. It is a small island not easy of approach. There is no one living on it but negroes, who are as wild as savages, and an overseer. You are not going to stay there any length of time, surely?"

"I shall stay there all my life, I think," Nan said, her voice full of the despairing pain that rose in her heart, as she thought: "Why should I want to go back? Let me bury myself there."

He looked at her with troubled interest. He longed to know her story. What was the meaning of the strange

situation he found her in?—a girl, almost a child—young, lovely, refined, and married to such a man.

“I think your parents or your friends would not let you stay long at such a place as Lost Island,” he said presently.

Nan’s heart was full at these words, and the recollection they brought of Selma’s treachery. It overflowed.

“I have no parents, no friends, no one in the wide world,” she said, ending the miserable confession with a sob, and hiding her face in her hand.

Dr. Thorne was silent. What could he say to comfort her? How could he help her? His heart, that men called cold and cynical, was moved to deepest pity for this girl, but he found no words to express it. Not so with his young comrade. Hartley threw down his violin and came to her side.

“Don’t say you have no friends,” he exclaimed. “I am your friend. Doctor Thorne is your friend. We will protect you against that drunken boor.”

She raised her head and looked at him, her eyes lighting through her tears, and her cheeks flushing as she said:

“He is my husband. You must not speak of him so to me.”

“Oh, pardon me! I forgot. Who wouldn’t forget? You are so young and so—so different from him. You surely are not going to Lost Island to live there alone with him?”

“Yes—I am. I have told you he is my husband.”

“But—you have need to be afraid of him. You saw what he was like yesterday.”

“It was the whisky. He will not drink it on the island. I will try to keep him from it,” she said, faintly.

“It was the whisky and the native brute in him too,” muttered Hartley, half aloud.

Nan had averted her face. The flush had gone out of her cheek. She was quite pale. She was thinking of Lost

Island and wondering what her life there would be like with Edmund Hoyt. Would he have more of those terrible seizures? A picture of his convulsed, purpled face came up before her. She turned suddenly to Thorne.

“Will you tell me what it was that he—my husband—had yesterday? I mean what kind of illness it was?”

He hesitated. She was unhappy enough. His answer would only make her worse if he told the truth, and her earnest, child-like eyes compelled him to tell the truth. Besides, it was his duty to tell her, if indeed she did not know.

“The attack was of the nature of a fit,” he said, “an—an epileptic fit. Do you not know what that is?”

“Is it not something that comes from drinking whisky?” she asked.

“No; drinking aggravates it, but it is in the blood—born in the blood. He has been subject to these seizures all his life. Did you not know this?”

“I did not know it. I never saw him like that before. I have known him such a little while.”

“And did no one tell you of this? Had you no friend—no guardian to prevent your marrying?”

“My guardian is his step-father. He and his wife wished me to marry their son. Friend! I told you I had none. She I thought was my friend deceived me, oh! so cruelly. I did not believe one could be so cruel, and I *loved* her, I trusted her so!”

Once more her voice broke and a sob struggled in her throat, but she forced it back.

“It is a shame,” said Thorne, forgetting his habitual self-repression in the glow of indignant pity. “You have been deceived and wronged, that is plain. You ought to have been told of this young man’s malady and his failings. You are an inexperienced child. You could not be expected to know why they wanted you to marry him. I do

not see. Pardon my asking one question. Did you have money?"

"I had nothing—nothing but a little land. My guardian bought it from me."

"Then I can not understand their motive, unless"—he stopped and did not add what was in his mind—"unless they wanted to rid themselves of the mortifying burden of a drunken, idiotic son."

Hartley had again drawn near to her. Her sad, lovely face, touched with the pale rosy light of the clouded sunset, captured his ardent boyish fancy.

"They made you marry him," he said. "You didn't know what he was, but now you do know, and you will leave him. You ought to for your own safety's sake. Come with us. We will take care of you, and carry you to your friends. If you have no friends of your own, Cyril will take you to his mother. You must not go to Lost Island with this man."

For an instant a light of hope suffused her face. It died out, and once more the sensitive flush stained her cheek.

"I must go with him, because I have married him. I promised to stay with him as long as I lived. I can not break my vow."

She said it so earnestly, with so much simple sincerity, and yet so hopelessly, Hartley looked at her in mute surprise.

"She has been brought up in some nunnery, Cyril," he said, in an under-tone.

Dr. Thorne was in doubt what to say. He too had primitive ideas as to the marriage vow, yet he felt he must make one suggestion.

"But his malady," he said, "that dreadful epilepsy, do you know it is a disease that is hereditary, and that it will descend to—"

"The promise was in sickness and in health, for better or for worse," she answered.

Dr. Thorne bit his lip; but he felt more than ever drawn to this queer girl, who seemed to have dropped down from some other sphere, so unworldly and old-fashioned was she.

Hartley uttered an impatient exclamation and began to draw the bow discordantly across his violin by way of expressing his dissatisfaction. Presently he coughed, and Thorne looked at him anxiously.

"That coat is too light for you now that the sun has gone down," he said. "You must put on your thicker coat. I'll bring it to you. I am going down to see if my patient is awake. Play while I am gone—play that symphony in E."

Nan's eyes followed the tall figure as he went away.

"How good he is to you!" she said. "Is he your brother?"

"No; he is no kith or kin of mine; but he has been brother, and father, too, to me all my life. Ever since I have had this cough he has been a mother to me, as fussy and watchful as any hen over her one chicken. He leaves his big practice in the city to come down South with me as soon as cold weather comes."

"That shows he is good and unselfish. How much you must love him!"

"Love him? Oh, yes, I like him first-rate. It's not altogether unselfish in him to come with me, though. He likes to hunt, and fish, and to sail. He has a little shooting-box at St. Luke's Island, and he has his yacht there. We are going to take a sail—as far as Jamaica, I believe. How jolly if we could have you with us! Can't you come, now? The skipper's wife is going—a good sort of woman."

"Oh, I would like it; but—I have told you—I do not belong to myself any more."

"You belong to *him*—that is simply a shame. I *will* say it, if you get mad with me. You do not love him, do you?"

"I do not think it is right for you to ask me that."

"Yes, it is; I am older than you, and I like you. I would like to sketch you just as you are sitting there in the after-glow."

"Do you paint pictures?"

"Oh, I do a little of everything. I can't tie myself down to one pursuit, like Cyril. He fairly burrows in science. I will sketch you in black and white, or paint your picture in water-colors, if you will go with us on the yacht trip to Cuba."

"I can not," she said, with decision, her cheeks flushing as she felt how tempting the offer of escape was to her. "But," she added presently, a great longing rising in her, "I wish I could go to your friend's mother; I am sure she is good. But it can't be; do not talk to me about it any more, please. Won't you play for me? I never heard the violin before, except at the theater, in the orchestra."

He began to play a symphony in a minor key, very soft and subtle and tender. She stole a glance at his face, noting its clear-cut features, its vivid expression. No, the Romeo of the stage was not half as handsome and graceful as this young man. Then his companion, Cyril Thorne, with his noble, intellectual face, his eyes and mouth full of quiet power. There were such men as this in the world, and she had thought Edmund Hoyt was a type of his species.

Dr. Thorne came up with Hartley's coat on his arm. He went back after giving it to him, for he had not yet been in Edmund's room. He went now and found him still asleep. He found, too, the bottle of whisky hidden among the bed-clothes. It had been drawn from the keg Edmund had contrived to get aboard the ship in spite of Selma's watchfulness. He called up the cabin boy, who had been bribed to get it, and gave him a severe reprimand, threatening to report him to the captain if it happened again.

Edmund waked up and heard the threat. He looked sullen, but did not say anything. Dr. Thorne spoke to him kindly and sat down by him, hoping to lead him to talk about his marriage and his plans. But he could get nothing satisfactory out of him. Edmund Hoyt had the cunning that often accompanies imbecility. He held his tongue, as Selma had warned him to do. He was so uncivil in his replies that Thorne gave up the hope of impressing on him the duty of treating his child-wife with more than usual kindness since he was taking her away to a place so isolated as Lost Island, where she must depend solely on him for company.

CHAPTER XV.

THE next morning Nan was out early. She was too restless to stay in the close state-room. She was on deck when the sun rose, and Cyril found her there when he came out of the surgeon's private room, which had been assigned to him.

She was watching the playful tumbling of the clumsy black porpoises in the smooth, sparkling water, and he was glad to see a smile come to her lips.

Hartley joined them there after breakfast. He was reading a novel of adventure in Australia, out of which he read a page or two aloud. This drew Cyril out to speak of his travels in South America and Mexico, and Nan listened entranced to his description of an old mission house, and an aged priest and his wonderfully beautiful daughter whom he had found there, and the snakes and tarantulas they had for pets. He was telling of a visit to a ruined Aztec temple when Edmund came up. Nan had taken his breakfast to him in his room, and had seen that he eat heartily and seemed almost, if not quite, as well as before, except that he was nervous. His hand was unsteady and his eyes were bloodshot and heavy.

Nan saw him first as he came toward them, and the pretty look of charmed intelligence with which she was listening to Cyril's story disappeared suddenly. Her spirits went back into their old eclipse. He took no notice of her companions, except to scowl at them as he came up to her, and took her rudely by the arm.

"You're a nice bride," he said, "off flirting with other men, and your sick husband in his room!"

He carried her off to another part of the deck and kept her by him the rest of the morning. When he went to sleep, which he soon did, he insisted on putting his head in her lap. He lay there sleeping and snoring loudly, his mouth half open, his face puffy and discolored.

"Titania and Bottom, for all the world!" said Hartley, calling Cyril's attention to the pair.

"Hush! and don't let her see you looking at her. She is killed with mortification now, poor child. No, it is not Titania. The fairy had no soul, and this girl has—more's the pity!"

St. Luke's Island came in sight in the afternoon. Soon they approached as near to it as possible, and the steamer cast anchor, while a lighter came alongside and conveyed such of the passengers as were bound for this stopping-place to the island, that looked green and picturesque, with its strip of white beach, its cottages, its palm-trees, and its broad-winged hotel, the piazzas brilliant with flowering pot-plants and blossoming vines. Further back were woods whose waving greenness were suggestive of singing birds, tropical fruits, and game.

A number of people were at the landing, watching the arrival of the lighter—sunburned men in shirt-sleeves and broad palmetto hats; a few women in light dresses, carrying white and light-colored sun-shades and palm-leaf fans. Negroes and swarthy mulattoes were in the majority, and there were some sailors in round hats and dingy flannel blouses—probably belonging to the trim little yacht, or

one of the two sail-boats or fishing-smacks that were anchored near the pier.

Edmund had told Nan that the boat belonging to Lost Island would be here to meet them. Selma had written weeks ago that he would be here on this ship. How she knew it, he couldn't tell. She had a way of knowing things ahead.

She had written to the overseer that they were coming here—he and Nan—before ever she had seen Nan, he believed. Ah! Selma was long-headed. He'd bet on her against any woman alive.

So Selma had arranged Nan's destiny before she went down to Haggard Creek. It had all been planned.

"She had planned in that cold-blooded way to entrap me," thought Nan. "What was, what could be her motive?"

Edmund left Nan sitting on her trunk on the landing while he went to see if the boat was there from Lost Island.

She saw Cyril standing at a distance talking to a sailor. He looked toward her, but did not approach her, and he evidently prevented Hartley from doing so. He did not want to make her situation more unpleasant by exciting Edmund's anger and jealousy any further.

Cyril seemed to be known on the island. The negroes touched their hats and grinned with pleasure as he stepped on shore.

A fine hound had broken away from the hands that restrained him and swam to meet the lighter. He was now at his master's side, and Thorne had his hand on the dog's wet head as he talked to the sailor.

Edmund came back in a towering passion.

"The boat is here," he said, "but those rascally niggers don't want to take her out. They say there's something wrong with her rigging. She got a bad jar on a rock they run her upon, the fools! and they are afraid they couldn't manage her because there's going to be a wind-

squall this afternoon. It's all gammon. They just want to stay here to-night and get their spree out. I'll show them. I'm going to Lost Island this night, or I'll turn every rascal of them adrift. There's not going to be any squall. It's clear as a clock now."

Yes, it was clear overhead, but in the horizon a dim-colored vapor was slowly boiling up, and the air was close and hot.

"I'm afraid there will be a storm," Nan said.

"Oh, I see through you. You want to stay here and talk to those fellows you're so struck on. You sha'n't do it. I'll get you to Lost Island this day. I'm sick of the sight of those meddling dudes!"

"Edmund! For pity's sake! The man hears you," whispered poor Nan, ready to die with shame, for she saw Thorne suddenly walk away.

She knew that the loud tones of Edmund's voice had reached his ears.

"I don't care if he did hear. I'll let him know I ain't going to be put upon. Come on; let's get aboard. I'll send two of the niggers for our trunks. I know what I'll do, I'll just show them the keg of whisky, and they'll trot that boat out fast enough. It'll be like shakin' a bundle of fodder before a stubborn mule."

"Isn't there another boat you can get. There's one—so new and light and stanch-looking."

"That's a yacht. She belongs to some swell or other. You couldn't get her for love or money. No, our own boat's good enough. It's just them good-for-nothing niggers that don't want to go out till to-morrow. They'll be willing enough when they smell whisky."

Nan's heart misgave her. She had no confidence in Edmund's judgment. She watched him anxiously. He was talking excitedly to a group of four negro men whose black bodies were bare to the waist. They seemed unable to agree among themselves. The tallest negro, to whom

the others appeared to defer, shook his head doubtfully, while Edmund stamped with rage.

Presently Nan saw another person approach the group. It was the sailor she had seen talking to Cyril. He approached Edmund and respectfully touched his hat, and said something which seemed to surprise and delight the other.

“You’re a trump!” she heard him exclaim; and he came back to her with a smiling face.

“Good luck!” he said. “That’s the skipper of the little yacht. He says he’ll take us to Lost Island free of charge. Think of that! He saw I was a gentleman, and he wants to get in with me. He wanted me to wait until to-morrow—says there’s going to be a squall; but I said I couldn’t and wouldn’t wait. The niggers were just comin’ round when he stepped up. I was glad to show ’em I can get along without ’em. I’ll make that overseer punish every one of ’em—cut their rations short.”

“But the owner of the boat?” Nan said.

“Oh, he’s not here. I told you he was some city swell. I’ll get the trunks aboard right off.”

He walked away. Nan got up and gathered her small belongings together. She looked around for Cyril and his young companion. She saw nothing of Hartley, but Cyril was standing at the water’s edge, talking to a man and a woman who were seated in a small row-boat—a fishing craft it seemed from the man’s wet net and basket. The woman wore a long sun-bonnet pulled over her face, and her figure was curiously stooped.

“She must be old,” thought Nan. “Doctor Thorne is talking to her, and now he has got into the boat, and they have pushed off. He has gone. I will never see him again—”

Edmund came up at this instant with the two negro men. He asked her some confusing question about the

baggage, and got into a slight altercation with one of the negroes who broke the strap of a trunk.

When Nan looked again she saw nothing of the fishing-boat with its three occupants. Where had it gone? Probably the yacht hid it from sight. The yacht presently took in her anchor and moved up to the pier, it being high tide. Ten minutes later the strangely united pair, with their trunks and other luggage, were on board the pretty craft, her sails were set, and she moved lightly away from St. Luke's Island.

CHAPTER XVI.

NAN sat on the deck of the "Curlew" and enjoyed the swift skimming over the waters. It was more delightful than the passage on the steamship, only she had not the companionship of the two congenial strangers. She had left them behind, and she had not even said good-bye to Dr. Thorne, who had been so kind. She would never see them again she said to herself. She was almost sorry they had ever crossed her path. She must forever compare them with Edmund Hoyt.

Her heart was heavy when she thought of the life that was now before her, but she was too much a child and a poet at heart not to find pleasure in the buoyant motion of the pretty yacht that made her feel as though she were riding over the waves on the back of some obliging dolphin, like the sea nymphs she had read of.

She turned for sympathy to Edmund. He was listening to a yarn told by one of the sailors whom he was plying with whisky from the flask he had in his pocket. She heard his coarse laugh, and saw the flask passed to the man at the helm, who emptied it with two vigorous pulls.

"He will make the men drunk, and they will neglect their duty," she thought, uneasily, "and they said there might be a storm; but there is no sign of any."

To an uninitiated eye, there was no sign of an elemental disturbance. The sun shone, it is true, through a thin reddish vapor, and the air was close and hot; but this was all.

It was all for one moment; but the next, as if by magic, the sky darkened, the lurid vapor condensed into a mass of cloud; there was a flash of lightning, a crashing peal of thunder, the wind sprung up in an instant, a gust struck the yacht with such violence that Nan was thrown against one of the beams that supported the rigging. She heard a familiar voice give a rapid command, and saw Cyril spring to execute his own order before it could be done by the sailor, whose wits were slightly befuddled by grog.

Clinging to her support, Nan saw the sails rapidly reefed and the yacht righted and turned so as to meet the next gust. It came with such force as to take away Nan's breath and force her to drop on her knees, clinging for dear life to the beam. A shower of spray was dashed in her face. She heard Edmund's sputtering cry for help as he rolled over on the deck until he clutched a portion of the rigging and clung to it.

"Come below before the next gust," said Thorne at her side. He caught her up in his strong arms as though she had been a baby, and carried her down into the cozy little cabin.

"Here, my good woman, is the lady you were to take care of. Attend to her. She had better lie down; she will not be so apt to be seasick. I must go on deck."

Nan looked to see whom he was talking to. It was the woman in the sun-bonnet—the woman she had seen in the fishing-boat. They had got on board the yacht then. This must be Dr. Thorne's own yacht. He had issued his orders with a voice of authority.

"Lie down on this lounge," said the woman. "The blow will be over presently."

Nan did as she was told. The yacht was tossed about at

such a rate that she could hardly keep her position. The thunder was incessant, and Edmund, who had stumbled down the cabin-steps and lay on the floor, groaned in terror at each peal.

The woman in the sun-bonnet laughed as she heard him. The laugh made Nan glance at her wonderingly, it was so fresh and youthful.

Presently the peals of thunder grew less sharp, the motion of the yacht was less violent. It was evident that the storm had spent its force.

“The worst is over,” the woman said.

Her voice was full and mellow. Nan looked at her quickly. She had pushed her long sun-bonnet back a little, and Nan caught sight of a pair of brilliant black eyes and a jetty tress of hair, ill according with the stoop and the slow movements of age that had characterized her when she sat in the fishing-boat. Can it be that these and the sun-bonnet and cape are a disguise? thought Nan. But why should the woman disguise herself? and why did she watch her so intently from the depths of the sun-bonnet as she sat by her, dipping a stick brush into a tin box full of snuff and rubbing her teeth, that Nan could see were white and sharp as an animal’s?

Nan felt uneasy under that persistent gaze. There seemed something malignant in it. She had a creepy sensation, as though this woman had a spite or some sinister design against her. It was unreasonable, she knew; yet when Cyril came into the cabin a few minutes later to tell her that the storm was over, she begged him to let her go on deck. She would like it better than the close cabin.

“The sea is still rough,” he said, “but you are quite a little heroine; you will not mind it.”

Edmund had got on his feet. He did not notice the woman in the sun-bonnet; he felt somewhat humiliated. The sailors had told him that the yacht belonged to Cyril,

the saw-bones he had been boasting to them that he had taken down on the ship.

The sea was still heaving unquietly, and the wind was coming in little puffs, but the storm was over. The sky was still cloudy, and it might rain later, for there were frequent flashes of lightning, but there would be no blow. The air was much cooled, and the little yacht seemed invigorated by her late encounter, for she was making gallant headway.

"We are near Lost Island," said Cyril. "You can see it yonder to the west."

He was at the helm. There were shoals and rocks hereabout, he told her. He had found them out when he was here last winter.

The sun was down, and the quick dusk of the tropics was settling upon the sea when they reached Lost Island. It seemed a long, low island, thickly wooded in part, in others covered with fields of grain dimly seen in the twilight.

CHAPTER XVII.

THE sun had set. The red after-glow tinged the island and the still restless sea with a weird, unearthly light.

The little yacht had quite easily come up to the rough wooden pier that jutted out from the beach.

"We are at our journey's end," Dr. Thorne said to Nan. A few moments after they landed. "Yonder, among the trees, you see your future home—a little brown cottage. I sat on its doorstep once and had a drink of water from the hands of a handsome girl dark as a gypsy. It is a lonely place. I hope," he added, looking at Edmund, who had come up and was looking at Nan with a scowl, "that you will not stay here long. It is too isolated a place for a young person to live at."

"She'll say as long as I want her to," Edmund said,

doggedly. "She won't be any lonesomer than I will, and she'll have plenty to do about the house. It's all the better to be off to yourself. You won't have any meddlers pokin' around then and givin' advice they ain't asked for."

Nan's cheeks flushed with mortification. Cyril gave no notice to Edmund's ungracious interruption.

He went on speaking to Nan.

"You must not think because you are here in this out-of-the-world Lost Island, that you too are lost and out of reach of your friends. They will remember you and turn their thoughts and eyes to Lost Island oftener than some may imagine. You will be kept in mind. If any wrong befall you, your friends will find it out, and punish the offense."

He felt constrained to say these words—fixing his cool gray eyes upon Edmund with a meaning in them that even his dull brain comprehended. He dropped his eyes and turned off muttering some words of abuse he dared not speak openly.

Cyril's finely cut mouth was touched with scorn as he looked after him. His expression changed when his glance met Nan's. There was a look of proud, sad reproach in her eyes. He felt that she would resent any expression of contempt for the man she was trying to feel loyal to. She believed it her duty to honor him—but how could she?

How he pitied her! In a few moment she would leave her alone on this loneliest of islands—alone with the man who must henceforth be her world! And such a man!

What could he say to her? If she were less innocent and more worldly wise he might speak to her of the wrong she was doing herself in holding to this marriage into which she had been entrapped. He would have told her that the law would free her from such an unholy contract. But this girl knew only the law of the Bible—the law of honor that bound her to her wifely vow—and she was proud and sensitive.

But he must say something. Her slender, child-like figure, her pale, pathetic little face and hopeless eyes as she looked off to the island and to the house that was to be her home with Edmund Hoyt, went to his heart. He said, gently:

“You told me you had no friend. It seems strange, for the young and lovely are seldom unfriended. I want to make a request of you. I want you to believe that I am your friend, and I want you to promise if you are ever in need of a friend’s help that you will let me know, if you can. I will be at St. Luke’s Island for a month. Will you promise to let me know if you should happen to need a friend?”

“I will—if it is in my power,” she promised. “You are most kind to be willing to trouble yourself for me, a stranger. You have shown me much kindness during all this journey. I thank you from my heart. I will never forget it.”

“And I will never forget you while my heart beats,” he returned, yielding to an impulse rare to him.

A chuckling laugh made them both turn around. The queer woman who had waited upon Nan in the cabin was standing near. She had a rusty traveling-bag in her hand, the big dingy cape muffled her stoop-shouldered figure, the sun-bonnet hid her face. What had moved her to laugh? She had her head turned from them toward the sea when they looked.

“Who is she?” Nan asked.

“I don’t know her—never saw her, I think, until a few hours ago. She spoke to me, and asked permission to come over to Lost Island in the yacht. She had heard my skipper offer to take a gentleman and his wife. She had been engaged as a cook by the overseer at the island a week ago. She is—”

“Nan, come and get your things together, and be ready to get off,” Edmund called out in his rough voice.

“What are you talking to that confounded saw-bones for?” he continued, when she was close to him. “You seem all-fired taken with that stuck-up swell!”

“You owe it to him that you are here. The yacht is his,” she answered, trying to repress her disgust. “You ought to thank him in common politeness.”

“It was the skipper that offered the boat to me. I’ll thank him. See here,” he went on, turning to the sailor, “I’m much obliged to you, I’m sure, for bringing us across to-night.”

“Say that to the boss yonder,” responded the man, gruffly. “It was him as sent me to you. Belay me if I’d left St. Luke’s this day if it hadn’t been his orders. Thank him.”

“I’ll be hanged if I do!” muttered Edmund.

He was in a hurry to get off the yacht and out of the presence of the man he felt was so far his superior.

As soon as the plank was thrown out he stepped upon it, pulling Nan with him.

The fumes of liquor in his head and his natural clumsiness made his step unsteady. His foot slipped, and over he would have gone into the water, dragging Nan with him, had not Cyril clutched him with one hand as he was falling, while he threw the other arm around Nan.

He took her in his arms and set her on the pier. She was frightened, and clung to him, trembling.

“Don’t leave me here! Take me away! Take me back!” she half sobbed.

He bent over her.

“Will you come?” he asked, eagerly. “I will take you back gladly.”

Her bosom heaved. She turned her eyes upon him with a wistful, irresolute look. Then her face changed. She drew her hand away.

“No, no; I must stay. This is my place,” she said, with sad firmness.

Cyril stood looking at her awhile, then he said, solemnly: "Good-bye. God watch over you and comfort you, my child!"

She did not speak. She could only look after him through her tears as he stepped back upon the deck of the "Curlew."

Edmund had picked himself up and was looking after the landing of his effects, particularly the keg of whisky, which was now half empty.

Everything was put off. The sailors got back upon the yacht, the plank was drawn in, and the "Curlew" turned her head from Lost Island.

Nan dared not look after her. She felt she must give way to the despair that swelled her heart almost to bursting. The departure of the yacht, with the man on board who had befriended and protected her, seemed to her like the breaking of the last thread of hope. There was nothing now for her. She was left here alone, helpless, in the power of the coarse and senseless being to whom she was bound by a tie she did not think it possible to break.

The strangely mated pair were left standing on the beach where the sailors had carried their trunks. Neither noticed the woman in the sun-bonnet. She had seated herself on the sand behind a pile of drift at a little distance. Her dingy brown cape and bonnet seemed a part of the sea-weed and rotten staves and fish-baskets of the drift pile.

Edmund was abusing the overseer.

"The lazy beggar! He ought to have been down here to meet us with some of the niggers to take our things," he said. "He saw us land, unless he is asleep. I'll holler him up."

He forthwith gave a shout that startled the echoes and caused a crane in the marsh grass to rise with a melancholy cry and a slow, heavy flapping of its gray wings.

Three men were soon seen coming from the little cluster of houses among the trees.

When they came nearer, Nan saw that they were not all negroes, as they had looked to be at a distance. One of them was the overseer—Gasker—a Mexican, tall, wiry, swarthy, with coal-black hair and a thick black mustache curling like a snake around his mouth.

“You’re a devil of a time comin’. Didn’t you see us landing?” was Edmund’s greeting. “Eatin’ your supper? Well, I hope you didn’t eat it all up. I’m hungry as a hog. Them chumps you sent with the boat got her out of fix, they said; anyhow, they wouldn’t budge from St. Luke’s until to-morrow. I’ll cut their rations short when they get here. What’ve you got for supper?”

“Fry fish and fish raw, hoe cake hot, and coffee, tam strong,” said the overseer.

“Good! It makes me smack my mouth!” exclaimed Edmund, his good humor quick to return like a child’s. “And I’ve got some of the best whisky here to wash it down with you ever tasted. Shoulder the keg and the trunk, boys, and let’s get up to the house. Ain’t you hungry, Nan? This is my wife, Gasker. Pretty as new shoes, ain’t she? Looks as tender as a baby.”

He put his arm around Nan and turned her so that she could be well seen. The two negroes and the dark-visaged Mexican stared at her until her cheeks were aflame.

“She’s a little one,” said Gasker, after he had looked his full.

“She ain’t much fat, that’s so,” Edmund said, apologetically. “She ain’t a big armful like—like my other gal, you know. But we’ll feed her up and get her as fat as butter. What there is of her is mighty sweet,” he added, hugging Nan in his half-drunken good humor and aroused amorousness. “Come on, sweetie, let’s get home. I fell like eatin’ a good supper and tumblin’ into bed—don’t you?”

He pulled the hand of the shrinking girl through his arm, and started forward. He stopped suddenly. The woman in the sun-bonnet had risen up from her seat on the sand unobserved. She came quickly up and stepped in front of Hoyt.

“Who are you?—what do you want?” he demanded.

She straightened her stooped figure and stood erect. At the same time, she snatched off the big muffling cape and the sun-bonnet, and stood revealed in the pale sunset radiance—a young woman of fine, full shape and coarse but darkly handsome face. Her bold, black eyes shot angry lightnings at Edmund.

“Cora!” he uttered, dropping back—“Cora—you here?”

“Yes, I’m here!” she replied, with a short laugh and a dangerous shake of her black head. “And I’m here to stay. Your mother thought she was mighty sharp, but I’ve got ahead of her. I was willin’ to stay off and hold my peace till they done somethin’ for you; but this is goin’ too far—this marryin’ business. How dare you marry another woman?—how dare you, Ned Hoyt, when you know—”

“It was Selma’s doings—she—”

“You poor, weak coward! I knowed you’d been led by the nose. Well, I’ll show Selma, and I’ll show you, and I’ll show that baby-faced thing you’ve brought here—I’ll show all of them that you belong to me!”

“Does he truly belong to you?” asked Nan, eagerly.

“He does, Miss Baby-face, and if you dispute it, just come on, and we’ll see which is the best grit!” cried Cora, pushing up her sleeves as she spoke, and looking a challenge at Nan.

“Oh, if he belongs to you—I am so happy—take him. Let me go away. I do not want him. Indeed, I do not!”

“You don’t?” Cora threw back her handsome head and laughed a loud, merry, mocking peal. “She don’t

want you!" she said to Edmund. "The girl don't want you. I thought so on the yacht. She likes the other fellow—the tall captain-doctor—and he likes her."

"No, she don't. She'd better not!" Edmund burst out, his face crimsoning with anger. "She's scared of you—that's why she talks so. And she not goin' away from here. If she does, I'll be ruined; Selma'll throw me off. She's signed a paper to give me a lot of money—thousands—if I keep Nan here. If she gets away I won't get a blamed cent. And Gasker there'll be turned off—your own pappy—along of you."

"Dat is so," interposed Gasker, "I shall be turned off; I shall have no pay. Madame Selma—she will be so mad! What for you come back here, you wildcat? You no business here. Let de man be; plenty mans in de world."

"Shut up, pappy; I know what I am doing. You are both of you cowards—afraid of a woman! Selma sha'n't rule me. I've got a claim on this sneak, and he knows it. Marryin' another woman! He ought to be strung up for it. Let him dare to look at her another time! Keep her here on the island, if that's Selma's game; but she sha'n't stay in that house; she sha'n't put her foot in it! Carry her somewhere else. There's the nigger houses; one of 'em's empty since old Caleb and his wife died of the fever. And there's the old fort and the gin-house—take her to one of them. You can fix it up for her to-morrow. I don't care what she does, so she doesn't come between me an' my man. Go ahead with that trunk, Jakey; t'other one will stay where it is until pap tells you where to take it. Come along, Edmund; what're you hanging back for? Don't fool with me!" she cried, turning upon him fiercely. Gripping his arm with one hand, she put the other significantly upon a revolver that was stuck in her belt.

The big, weak-minded youth changed color and fell to shaking, and submitted without a word to be led away by

the masterful Cora. She marched off with her prize, the negro following behind with the trunk. Edmund was sullen and listened to her abuse and ridicule in dogged silence.

Presently she changed her programme and began to talk to him in a kind of roughly caressing way that put him into a better humor. The sight and smell of the hot supper restored his spirits, and he was soon doing justice to the fried fish.

CHAPTER XVIII.

NAN was left standing on the beach with the overseer and the negro, who had set down her trunk at Cora's command.

Cora seemed to have the mastery on the island, by reason, no doubt, of her strong will and her fierce temper. Gasker, her father, though a six-foot giant, was afraid to thwart her. He was not in her confidence. Her sudden appearance had amazed and angered him. He had been paid to keep her away, and money was more to him than the scant affection he had for his wildcat daughter.

His dark face wore an ugly scowl as he stared after her retreating figure. She had turned and made a mocking obeisance to the group on the beach.

"She is ter tevil—tam her!" he ejaculated.

"No, no; she is an angel," cried Nan, laughing hysterically.

She felt like a bird who has just slipped from the clutch of its captor. She gave as little thought to what manner of world she had escaped unto and what would befall her now, whether snare or starvation, as would the bird itself. She only felt she was free of Edmund Hoyt. Another woman had taken possession of him. She must be his wife, of course. She said she had a claim on him, and he had not denied it. She—Nan—did not belong to him.

Oh, what joy not to belong to Edmund Hoyt! She felt like skipping over the sands with a bird's light-heartedness.

"Cora had a right to him," she went on, "and she has taken him. That is only what she ought to do. I am glad—so glad! And I hope they will be happy, and that he will mind her and not drink any more whisky. And I will go back the way I came. You will take me to St. Luke's in your boat?"

"I hafs no boat—de boat is no good."

"But it will be fixed, and will come to-morrow. I can stay here to-night somewhere, and you can take me when the boat comes. I will pay you. I have some money."

"You not hafs money to pay me for lose my place," he said, sullenly. "De orders was to keep you here."

"Whose orders? Mrs. Brent's? She has nothing to do with me. I will leave here if I have to take a skiff and go by myself."

"You will, will you?" Gasker said, with a cunning grin. "We'll see about tat. No boat leafs te island tat we don't want her to go. You better be good to me, else maybe you never gits 'way s'long as you lifs."

He moved closer to Nan and grinned down in her face. His dark visage, with that evil leer upon it, was so hideous that she felt like screaming.

"Does nobody else live on the island?" she asked, tremulously. "Is there no house with a woman in it where I could stay to-night?"

"Te white folks house up tere, and de nigger cab'ns yonder—tat is all," he answered, pointing to the roofs of some huts scattered among the trees in the twilight distance. "Tat tevil, Cora, scratch out your eyes ef you go to te house. Where ten she specs you to stay? Tere's de nigger cab'n."

"I would rather sit here all night on the sand than to

stay in that hut where the negroes died of fever. Your daughter said something about an old fort."

"Te old fort is a skeersome place. Tere's owls and bats an'—"

"An' dere's *hants* dere," spoke up the negro who had been a listener to the colloquy. "Dere's sperits dat walks froo dat ole fort ev'y night."

"There ain't no sperit there that'll harm folks as has got sense and 'ligion to cross theirselves and say a Hail Mary," piped up a shrill, strange voice.

Nan looked and saw that an odd-looking being had risen up from behind the drift pile like one of Macbeth's witches.

It was a girl—a child, to judge from her small form and short dingy-white cotton frock, but her little peaked dark face had a suggestion of age and shrewdness in its twinkling eyes. Her skin was brown, but her features were small, and her hair straight, hanging in neglected wisps. She had a battered palmetto hat on her head and shoes of hairy skin on her feet. Her legs, under the short frock, were bare and brown as her face.

It was a queer apparition, but the appearance of one of her own sex—with a look and a voice she liked instinctively—was a welcome relief to Nan. After her first start of surprise she smiled at the little figure.

"Who lives at the old fort?" she asked.

"Me and Banjer and Billy—Billy's a goat. And that's all," she said. "We ain't afraid of the sperits. We's got sense and 'ligion."

Nan laughed.

"I'm not afraid of the ghosts, either. And I'll go to the fort with you to-night," she said. "Take my trunk there, please"—to the negro, who picked up one end of the little trunk, giving vent to a short whistle that signified it wouldn't be he who would choose to stay at the old fort with the ghosts.

Nan turned to the overseer.

"I will see you to-morrow, sir," she said, with a dignified bend of her little head. "I will then make arrangements with you for leaving the island."

Gasker stared at her without speaking. She went up to the girl and said, almost gayly:

"Lead the way to your castle."

She felt unspeakably relieved at her deliverance from the man she no longer believed to be her husband. She took some silver from her pocket and gave it to the hesitating darky, who still held one end of her trunk. It acted like magic upon him. He picked up the trunk, tossed it on his broad shoulder, and trotted on ahead, followed by Nan and her queer companion.

Gasker, left alone on the beach, relieved his feelings by pulling savagely at his snaky mustache.

"Leave the island!" he repeated. "'Tam! she won't git away soon as she tinks. I'll see tat much of orders is kep'!"

He stood looking after the girl and her funny escort until they had entered the woods on the right, through which the path to the fort led them. Then he remembered his appetite and the waiting supper. Pulling himself together with a shake of his long, slightly stooped shoulders, he proceeded with long strides to the house, where Cora and Edmund were already comfortably seated at the pine dining-table in the little three-roomed cottage.

When Nan and her companion came to the point at which the path turned into the woods, they found that the darky with the trunk had halted and stood leaning against a tree.

"I'se afeard uv snakes in dis woods," he said. "I'se afeard dey comes out in de ebenin' to cool; an' it's so dimmesome in here you can't see 'em."

"You're afeard of your shadow," retorted the girl. "You wait. I'll strike a light and go on ahead."

She reached down into the hollow of the big tree he was leaning against, and drew out a handful of pitch-pine splinters.

"I allers keep them here handy," she exclaimed, as she struck a match and touched it to the splinters, that blazed up at once. "Now follow me," she said, picking up a stout stick. "If there's a snake in the path, the light'll shine in his eyes and I'll be ready for him."

On they went, Nan in the wake of her queer guide, and the darky following with the trunk. It was quite dusk in the woods, and the light of the pine torch had a weird effect as its rays streamed out through the thick, wet foliage upon the big gnarled trunks of the trees, and the twisted, snake-like vines. It gave the little torch-bearer the grotesque appearance of a legless ghost, for the rays fell partly on her short, white cotton frock, while her legs were lost in the dusk, which was brown like them.

The narrow path twisted among the trees for a short distance, then there came a space clear of large trees, and showing signs that it had once been a clearing. Little tumuli, that were seen to be masses of rocks or of decayed logs overgrown with vines, were scattered here and there. Almost in the center of the space rose what seemed a great mass of vegetation.

"Here we are," said the guide, stopping before it. "Here's the fort."

Then Nan saw that the nucleus of this strange-looking mass was a structure made with hands—probably of rocks, or sea shells and cement—in days long past, when it was used as a stronghold perhaps by the pirate hordes that infested these islands of the summer sea.

The upper body of the fort rested upon arches of the cemented shells or stones. But the original structure had long been hidden by vines and moss. Vines had overgrown the upper part. The roof had partly fallen in, and had been supplemented by a thatch of palmetto leaves and

bark, making it rain-proof. Trees had sprung up inside the arched ground-floor, that had been paved with shells, but was broken up in many places. Cedar, and sea-myrtle, and young pecan-trees had grown close to the arches and twisted their boughs fantastically with the muffling vines. The one large tree that grew inside the partial clearing showed its enormous trunk close to the fort. It was a live-oak of noble girth, with branches that had grown about the walls, and through the arches, and over the roof, embracing the entire structure in its great ever-leafy arms. Nan stood looking at the strange mass in amazement. Her guide, holding the torch aloft, turned and looked at her, and said with pride:

“Ain’t it a scary-lookin’ place? They say forty men was killed her onct, long ago. There’s blood on the floor upstairs. Ain’t you scared to stay here all in the woods? Hadn’t you rather go to the nigger cabin? or I’d go to the white folks’ house whether or no, and fight that Cora out. I’ll help you to fight her. I’m good at scratchin’ and kickin’, and I’ve got a mighty sharp knife in my belt. If you’ll pitch in for your rights, I’ll help you, sure.”

“I don’t want my rights, as you call it, in that line. I don’t want Edmund Hoyt. I’d rather sleep on the ground, or under the sea, than in a house where he was.”

“You’ve got pluck. You won’t be scared of ghosses. Let’s go in. See that owl. The light blinds him. Lots of bats and screech-owls sleep under here, but no snakes, only black racers. They won’t hurt you.”

She lifted a curtain of moss that hung over one of the arches and entered, followed by Nan and the negro.

Her torch threw its red illumination around the walls of verdure, and Nan could see the glint of eyes here and there—the eyes of the bats and owls. Some of these, disturbed by the light and voices, began to fly about, fanning the flame with their dusky wings, and brushing against Nan’s face.

"They won't hurt," said the guide, dodging a big bat as she spoke. "Now we'll go upstairs. Here they are; do you think you can mount 'em? The rungs is big and strong."

It was merely a stout ladder leading up to a hole or door in the floor overhead.

"Of course I can mount it," said Nan. "I've climbed many a ladder—and tree, too."

"Good for you; you won't want any help, then. Come on."

She scampered up the ladder like a squirrel, holding her torch. As she reached the entrance, with Nan close behind her, the girl heard a loud bleat that so startled her she was near losing her footing. At the same instant the torch-light shone on a pair of fiery eyes and a long, rugged visage decorated with horns and a flowing beard.

"Vamoose!" cried the guide.

The goat nodded his head, and moved from the entrance.

"That's Billy; he sleeps up here," said the girl. "He's better'n any watch-dog. Jes' let any strange somebody come up this ladder, and Billy will have 'em going down head foremost afore you can say Jack Robinson! But soon as he sees it's me or Banjer, and hears me say 'Vamoose!' he's quiet as a lamb. Bring the trunk up here, Jake. What's the matter with you? That nigger's scared outer his wits! Look at him, will you!" she said, turning round and throwing the glare of the torch upon the darky, who was about to dump the trunk down unceremoniously and bolt from the place. "Be ashamed of yourself! Pick the trunk up and bring it on up here!"

The negro obeyed. He mounted the ladder, and, standing at the entrance, pushed the trunk into the room.

"I seed sumpin' withouten no head down dere!" he said, in a husky whisper. "Dis ole place is enuff to skeer

General Washin'ton!" and he sprung down the ladder and ran off as though the headless ghosts were after him.

The queer girl laughed her little, noiseless chuckle. Then she went to a shelf, and took a candle out of a box and lighted it by her torch, laying the torch on the hearth.

"Them's my company-candles," she said. "I made 'em myself out of wild bees'-wax. Fat lightwood knots are good enough for me and Banjer. Now, look around and see how you like this here for a sleepin'-place."

CHAPTER XIX.

INSIDE THE OLD FORT.—RENA'S STORY.

NAN looked around upon the strange interior. It was circular in shape, and thatched overhead with palm-leaves. She felt as though she were in some bower, or some bird's nest, for there was a carpet of pine-shatters under her feet, and the low walls of the structure were so covered with the foliage of vines and tree branches that one could hardly see any of the material—cement and shells—it had been built of more than a hundred years before.

The rank vegetation outside had made its way through the port-holes and the cracks and fissures in the walls—here a limb of a tree, fantastically crooked, had thrust itself through a port-hole; there a great brown vine had grown through a crevice which it helped to widen, and, curving up like a snake, had garlanded the walls with its leaves and branches. Overhead a thick thatch of palmetto leaves and bark supplied the place of the roof long since decayed or carried away by storms.

The circular interior of the fort was divided into three apartments by a screen-like partition made of tall canes, cut from the cane brake, set in upright rows, each lower end stuck into holes or cracks in the puncheon floor. Palmetto leaves and long moss matted and interwoven with the canes made them into a light but impervious screen.

And thus three little rooms had been made in the inside of the old fort. Each had a door with a curtain of plaited moss hanging before it. This added to the bower-like appearance of the room, as did the thick carpet of pine-shatters that covered the puncheon floor, emitting a resinous fragrance.

The furniture was peculiar. Several cypress stumps, cut into shape and covered with coarse sacking, did duty as seats; but there was one stout and well-made easy-chair cushioned in faded damask. And there was a small, old-fashioned book-case with a green baize door. A no less old-looking clock ticked loudly on a shelf over the fire-place. On another shelf were arranged a few pieces of gaudily flowered crockery, a brown, dragon-shaped pitcher and several flat gourds.

Gourds of larger size—one particularly enormous—sat on the floor against the wall, evidently used to hold provisions, soap, or household condiments of some sort. Pendent from the wall hung a water-bucket, a frying-pan, and some other cooking utensils. There was a small oven in the fire in the patched-looking fire-place where the chimney, also of cement, seemed to have been nearly demolished and supplemented by a section of the rusty smoke-stack of a steamboat. An aged-blackened sailor's chest and an old hair-covered trunk completed the furniture of the place—or, at least, all that Nan could see at her first survey.

The occupant of this queer lodge in the wilderness stood watching her with bright, beady black eyes, holding her candle, the big goat, who was hungry, twitching her cotton frock between his teeth.

“Well,” she said, “what do you think of it? It's a mighty poor-lookin' house, ain't it? Don't you wish you had gone to the nigger cabin?”

“No, indeed,” Nan answered, promptly. “I like this.

It is lovely. It's like the woods. Do you stay here by yourself?"

"Me and Banjer and Billy—and the ghosses."

"Are there ghosts sure enough?"

She nodded her little head—a quick, bird-like movement.

"Yes, there's ghosses—the sperits of the men that was killed in here thousands of years ago. They ain't a-goin' to hurt you, though. I see 'em and I hear 'em sometimes, 'cause I was born with a caul over my head."

"Is that a ghost I hear now?" asked Nan.

While she stood there she had been hearing at intervals a low monotonous thrum-thrum that seemed to come from one of the queerly partitioned rooms.

"No; that's Banjer. He's playin' to let me know he's done his work and wants his supper. That's his room, there; and here's yours."

She lifted the moss curtain that hung before the door of one of the little rooms, and Nan saw a neat cot-bed inside.

"There's where you are to sleep," she said. "I'll curl up out here on the pine straw and keep watch, me and Billy. Banjer sleeps on a pallet in t'other room."

"Is Banjer black?" asked Nan, timorously.

She was not accustomed to negroes, and she had a little cowardly fear of them.

"No, he ain't; he's whiter than me, and he's mighty handy when he takes a likin'. He helps me, and I take care of him."

"He is a child, then?"

"A child! Bless your heart, he's tall as this ceilin'. He's mighty well-growed, Banjer is. And he's been in the world some time, I reckon. His hair and beard's got a heap of gray in it. But then he is jes' like a child about most things. He's wrong in here"—tapping her head—"so folks say; but Banjer's got a heap of sense, and he knows good folks from bad. He jes' d'spises old Gasker."

He can't git him to do a thing; but he'd do anything my pappy told him. He lived with us in the white folks' house when pappy was overseer. I've known Banjer all my days. He ain't no kin to me, but he seems kinder like he is, and he is all I've got now."

"Are your father and mother dead?"

"Yes, both of 'em. Mother died long time ago. Pappy died of the yaller fever three years ago. He caught it from a Havana vessel at St. Luke's. They're both buried outside the fort under the big live-oak-tree; that was the old Spanish buryin'-ground, they say. Mother was a fine scholar. She learned pappy to read, and he learned me all I know—that ain't much. That book-case was hers, and the books in it. They're mighty old, and their leather kivers is black and musty-smellin'. They belonged to her grandfather. He was a big judge or somethin'. Mother run away with pappy, and her kin never forgive her."

"Tell me more about yourself," said Nan, deeply interested in her queer hostess. "I am an orphan too."

"Yes, I know it"—with another quick nod of her bird-like head. "I know more about you than you think. Yes; I'll tell all I know of myself—if you want to hear it. But I mustn't stand here idle. I'll be gittin' supper while I talk. I've got a tender young squirrel a-bakin' in the oven there, and some hominy cookin' in the stew-pan on the coals. I was gittin' supper when I heard Edmund's yell, and I run to the landin'. I knowed in my mind 'twas you had come. First, I'll give Billy his corn or he'll jerk my ap'on off."

She took from the shelf a large, round, broad-mouthed gourd, half full of shelled corn, and set it before the goat, who fell to work at once disposing of the kernels that rattled as he delicately nibbled them up and swallowed them without chewing, to be masticated presently as he lay on the straw near the door "chewing his cud," with sleepy, half-shut eyes.

Meantime, Billy's mistress had drawn one of the cypress stump seats to the fire-place, seated herself on it and lifted the lid of the oven, letting out an appetizing odor.

"The squirrel's brown and tender," she said, "and now I'll stir some bene into the hom'ny, and then make some Yupon tea. The Yupon grows wild, but it's first-rate tea. I've got a corn-dodger and some cassava pone already cooked. I don't know what made me bake 'em to-day, only I felt in my bones that I was goin' to have company. Never did have any company. Nobody lives here but niggers, and they're afeard of the fort. They wouldn't come up here for anythin'. They steal my chickens and eggs, though. Me and Gasker don't 'gree. He's always threatened me and Banjer, but he's kinder 'fraid of us. He knows Banjer's mighty strong in the arm, when he gits mad, and he knows I've got pap's old gun—you see it yonder—and I can shoot her too. When pappy died—almost before he was cold in the ground—this Gasker, he came here to be overseer. Mrs. Brent put him in this place. He don't know much about overseein' on a farm, but he was an old crony of hers, I reckon, leastways, I think he's knowed her and done things for her, and she's helped him out of some scrape—jail, I spec', from the way I heard the two of 'em talkin' once. Well, he came to be overseer, and he and Cora put me and Banjer out of the house in no time. I didn't know where to go. I had lived there all my life. I didn't know about any other place. I wouldn't stay with the niggers, and I had no money to go away, so I came here and brought the things we had in the other house. It was a scary-lookin' place when we first took possession. We fought out all the bats, and me and Banjer patched the roof and made them little rooms and put up the shelves and fixed the chimley and the fire-place. We worked odd times for a whole year afore we got things kind of decent. Now we live here right comfortable. Nothin' bothers us. A nigger started to

come up here to steal one night. He stumbled against Billy at the door there, and got butted clean down the ladder. He thought it was the devil. A goat's eye shines like a ball of fire in the night. We ain't been 'sturbed since.'

"But how do you live?" Nan asked, greatly amused and interested.

"Oh, we don't need to buy much. Everythin' to eat nearly is right out there to our hand—figs, and melons, and paw-paws, and bananas and oranges, and the wood's full of game, and lots of fish in the creeks and the sea. Then I've got a cow and chickens and some goats, only the niggers kill 'em up. We git money enough to buy our clothes by makin' baskets out of reeds and permeeter (palmetto), and we make moss mats and permeeter hats. I sew the hats and Banjer plats the permeeter—he plats it beautiful—and I spin and knit stockin's to sell, and sometimes we help at sugar bilin's and corn and rice harvestin' and cotton pickin', and then we take pay in sugar and rice and spinnin' cotton, and corn to feed Billy on, and to grind into hom'ny on the hand mill, and mix with bene. This is bene I'm stirrin' into the hom'ny now. Bene's mighty nice to put in hom'ny and in syrup candy."

She was stirring into the hot hominy a quantity of small brown seeds poured from a gourd. She made Nan eat a handful of the little oily seeds. They were very palatable, of a rich nutty flavor. The bene grew all around the old fort, she told Nan, together with melons and tomatoes, the seeds of which had been planted long ago in the clearing that had at one time been around the fort.

"I think you're hungry," she said, looking with pleasure at Nan's enjoyment of the bene.

She laughed, showing her little white teeth in contrast to her sun-tanned skin. She had a wonderfully shrewd, pleasant little face, in spite of her neglected hair and the sunburn.

“How old are you?” asked Nan. “And your name? You haven’t told me your name.”

“I’ll be fifteen in May. My age is down in mother’s Bible yonder, and my name is Serena Serafina Stubbs. Ain’t Serena Serafina pretty? Mother got it out of a book named ‘Rinaldo Rinaldini.’ It’s there in the book-case. Rinaldo Rinaldini was a robber chief, and he had lots of wives. I was named after two of his wives; but they all call me Coot. I despise to be called Coot. Mother wanted me to be called my full name, but pappy couldn’t remember it, and he called me Rena.”

“I shall call you Rena, too, if you like,” said Nan. “My own name has been changed and cut short. Once, when I was a happy little child and had a home and a father and mother, I was called Anabel after mamma.”

“Anabel!” repeated Rena, “Anabel—that’s strange!” she muttered to herself. Then she added: “Now they call you Nan—Nan Haggard. I heard that name before I ever saw you. I heard Edmund’s mother talkin’ about you to Gasker when she was here, ’bout, let me see, five weeks ago. They were talkin’ mighty secret, out in the woods; but I heard ’em. I was up in the tree gatherin’ paw-paws. I kept still and heard ’em talkin’ about you, and she said you was to be sent here, and Gasker was to see that you stayed here and wasn’t ’lowed to go away. She said maybe you would be married to Edmund when you come, and maybe you wouldn’t; but, anyhow, you must be kep’ here, and she give him some money and said she would give him a heap more if he done as she said, and he promised. He said he didn’t need money to do what she wanted him to do, for he would go through the fire for her, and she smiled at him. She was all in white, with her straw hat on her yaller, curly hair. My, how pretty she looked! But she ain’t good—I know that.”

Nan was listening in eager wonder and perplexity.

“She told the overseer that I was to be sent here and

not permitted to go away," she was saying to herself. "She told him this before she had ever seen me. So it was all planned out beforehand. She had deliberately planned my ruin before she saw me. What could be her motive? I had never injured her. Oh, what a depth of treachery!"

Rena was looking at her and saw her distressed mouth and the flash in her expressive eyes.

"Yes, she's a bad one, that handsome Selma, as Edmund calls her," the girl presently said. "She's got the real cat-eye—gray-green with a spark of yellow fire down in it, and she's got the cat nature. When she smiled it was like a cat purrin' and rubbin' against you. She fooled me at first. I was ready to break my neck gettin' her fruits an' things; but she didn't fool Banjer. He knows a good person, same as a dog does. She fooled you, I reckon. She tricked you into marryin' that Edmund."

"She did," said Nan. "What she did it for I can not imagine, nor why she wanted me brought here to this lonely island and kept here by force."

"Haven't you got some money she wants to git hold of?" queried the girl, with her keen little eyes full of investigation.

"No, I have no money. Her husband was my guardian. I had nothing but a little poor land. He was kind enough to buy it from me the day I married. It was not worth what he gave for it."

"I'll bet it was. If it hadn't been, Selma wouldn't er let him buy it. Maybe she sent you and Edmund here to git you off her hands and keep from supportin' you. She wants all the money to buy fine clothes to set off her beauty. She was mighty keen to fix it with Gasker so you couldn't get away. She told him the boats must be kept locked, and he mustn't 'low you to see anybody if they came to the island. But nobody ever does come here."

“Oh, I must get away—I *will* get away from here!” cried Nan. “I don’t know what they may try to do with me here—that dreadful-looking overseer and the woman, his daughter. And Edmund, he is just a tool; but I want to go where I will never see him again. I must get away from here! If only I had gone back on the ‘Curlew’ with Doctor Thorne,” she thought. “If I had only known I was not Edmund Hoyt’s wife and owed no duty to him!”

“Don’t be down-hearted,” her small companion said, cheerily. “We’ll watch chances. I’ll help you git away, and I’ll go with you. If only we had some money, we might bribe the niggers.”

“I have money—I have the money I sold my land for,” Nan said.

“Have you got it yourself, or has Edmund got it in his hands?”

“I gave him only a part of it; the rest is in a little purse tied around my neck.”

“That’s good; keep it there. That Cora might try to get it from you, or put Edmund up to it, or old Gasker. They ain’t none too good. The money’ll stand your friend; and if we can’t git away by our wits, a-watchin’ chances and slippin’ off unbeknownst, then you can talk money to ’em. Now you can have your supper; it’s ready. You shall eat here by yourself, on this little table, and Banjer and me will have our supper there on the chist, where we eat most times, anyway.”

While she had been talking she had deftly dished up the squirrel, nicely browned, and the bene hominy, and put them, with the bread and cassava-pudding, on a little table covered with a clean but patched white cloth. Then she poured out a cupful of the Yupon tea from the squatty metal tea-pot, and pushed the easy-chair in which she had ensconced her guest up to the little table.

“Now I will call Banjer,” she said. “He’s playin’ still; he’d keep it up all night, without knowin’ what it

was he was wantin' and waitin' for. But he'll come when I call him."

She put two fingers to her lips and gave a shrill whistle. With some curiosity, Nan looked at the moss curtain that hung before the reed and palmetto-screened compartment whence the monotonous thrum-thrum had issued. The moss was pushed aside, and a strange, impressive figure appeared—a man, tall and grandly proportioned, with long hair waving on his shoulders, and a mass of gray and blonde beard falling on his breast. His features were good, his brow was full and noble in shape; but as he came nearer into the circle of light made by the candle, Nan saw that the face was a blank. There was no expression there, except one of dreamy abstraction and placid sensation—like that on the face of a baby. He smiled like a half-awake child when Rena met him, and gently took from him the rough, lute-like instrument fashioned out of a gourd, the strings of which he had been twanging.

"He made this banjo, and he's had it, or one like it, ever since I knew him," she said to Nan, as she put the primitive instrument on the shelf.

"You play for us after you've had your tea, Banjer. Supper's ready at last, and we've got company. See what nice company we've got."

She held the candle in its bottle stand close to Nan as she said this, pulling Banjo around that he might take a good view of the "company."

He took no further notice than to look at Nan with a vague, pleased smile on his face. Nan felt moved to extend her hand and grasp his with sympathetic warmth.

"I am glad to know you, Banjo," she said. "I am a stranger on your island. My name is Anabel Haggard—Nan I am called."

To her amazement he started—a flash of struggling intelligence lighted his face for an instant.

"Anabel!" he repeated—"Anabel! Anabel!"—all the

while holding Nan's hand in a vise-like grip and staring into her face.

"Banjer! What on earth's come over you, Banjer?" cried Rena, excitedly. "Sit down here and let me give you some tea. Sit down."

She interposed herself between him and Nan, and, repeating "What's come over you? This lady's a stranger; she'll be scared to death of you!" she at last got him to loose Nan's hand and sit down.

But he sunk his head on his breast, and remained in that position, paying no heed to Rena and the cup of tea she was trying to get him to drink. They heard him muttering indistinctly to himself a word that sounded like "Anabel."

"I never saw him like that—exactly—since pappy died. He used to have spells when I can first remember. He would get out of his head and talk all sorts of wild things. But he hardly ever says a word of late. You'd think he didn't know how to talk. I hadn't heard him speak a thing, only to mutter and sing to his banjo and his pet squirrel for months 'cept once when Gasker made him mad. Gasker beat a little sickly nigger boy one day when they was stoppin' the fish creek with the fish seine. You ought to seen Banjer jump on him and pummel him. I tell you, Banjer's strong! He talked too. I'm afraid he said a cuss word, maybe mor'n one. He told Gasker he was a coward and a scoundrel. Gasker's been hankerin' to pay him for that maulin' ever since he got it, but he's afeard to try. And he knows the niggers all like Banjer. He never does nobody any harm, and he'll turn in and help 'em out when they're hard pushed. He has bad spells with his head; he's had 'em ever since I knowed him, and that's been for ten years, I reckon—ever since before mother died."

"How came he here? What is his history?" Nan asked, and colored uneasily the next instant, for it seemed

to her that Banjer must comprehend that they were talking about him. But the momentary flash of intelligence was gone. The vacant, dreamy expression was on his face. He was eating his supper and looking as uncomprehending as Billy himself.

“I don’t b’lieve I can remember how he came here,” Rena said, knitting her forehead reflectively. “I don’t think pappy ever told me. I think, though, he’s somebody that worked for Mr. Brent, or some kin of his maybe, though I never heard Mr. Brent say so. Mr. Brent didn’t often come to the island. He would come to St. Luke’s, and pappy would go there and settle up. I’ve heard pappy say Mr. Brent got this island in a trade or a speckylation once when he used to be mighty rich, and had big mines in some corner of the world—South America, I believe. He never set much store on the island, though, till he lost most of his money. He sent his wife here then to look after things, and she put Gasker here, and tried to make Edmund stay, so he’d be out of the way of whisky. First thing she knowed he had taken up with Cora.”

“And did Mrs. Brent know that Edmund had married Cora?”

“I—I think she didn’t know it. They must have been married at St. Luke’s,” and she added to herself, “if they were married at all.”

“They went off once together and came back,” she said aloud. “Then his mother came and separated them. I heard her tell Gasker that time, under the paw-paw-tree, that he must keep them apart. She had other plans for him. The other plan was to marry him to you.”

“I am so glad I am not his wife. I shall thank God for it on my knees to-night before I sleep,” said Nan, fervently.

“That ought to be right soon, for I know you’re mighty tired. I hope you’ll sleep like a top. Don’t mind if you hear a noise in the night. There’s a varmint

been hantin' round my hen-house and slippin' through the cracks after the chickens. I'll lay for him to-night. Maybe he's two-legged, and if he is he'll get peppered a little bit to make him more keeful. Pappy's old gun sends small shot mighty straight."

Ten minutes later Nan was snugly in bed in the little clean cot behind the screen of cane and palmetto; a net to protect her from the mosquitoes, that were not troublesome, however, on the island with its coral rock foundation, clean sand beaches and freedom from marshes.

For some time she could not sleep. The strangeness of her surroundings, the old fort with its suggestions of blood and death in the past and "ghosses" in the present, the weird hooting of an owl in the woods outside, the chirping of insects, and for a long while the low thrum-thrum of Banjo's mandolin, kept her wakeful and wondering. Then there was the ever-recurring questions: Why had Selma Brent done this great wrong to her? and what should she do to get away from the island—away from the possibility of seeing Edmund Hoyt again?

"But, oh, thank Heaven, I am not bound to him! He is Cora's husband, he is not mine," was the comforting thought that came after the perplexing conjecture. And with these consoling words upon her lips and a vision of Cyril Thorne's manly face flitting across her tired brain, Nan fell asleep in the old fort to the monotone of Banjo's mandolin and the hoot of the horned owl outside.

CHAPTER XX.

WAKING IN THE OLD FORT.—GASKER'S SCHEME.—THE
LITTLE SPIT-FIRE.

THE sun shining brightly after the stormy night, and peeping into the fort through the port-holes and the many crevices in the walls, awakened Nan next morning from her refreshing sleep. She lay a moment looking up at the

strange ceiling over her head. The palm-leaf thatching, though fairly impervious to rain, permitted the sun-rays here and there to filter through the translucent leaves. The vines, that almost hid the walls, had crept up to the ceiling and thrown a green network in places over the golden brown thatch. As Nan looked, she saw a brown chameleon spring upon one of the vine branches directly overhead. She was too well accustomed to the chameleon's cousin, the lizard, to feel afraid, and she watched the creature as his transparent skin gradually took the green color of the vine leaves.

Presently he darted away, and when Nan saw him next, he was brown again, and in the act of pouncing upon a fly on the screen-like wall of her bedroom.

She could hear Rena moving about outside. Chiding herself for laziness, she rose, dressed quickly and went out. Her little hostess turned round from the fire, and said the breakfast was ready, all but the fruit. The fresh figs and melons could be gathered in a few minutes, as there was plenty all around the fort.

"Let me gather them," Nan said, and armed with the reed-basket, she went down the ladder. As she sprung from the bottom rung, she saw Banjo coming with a pail of milk. His pet squirrel was perched on his shoulder, and Billy, the goat, trotted at his heels.

"Good-morning," Nan cried out.

He lifted his head, and his blank, child-like face instantly became strangely agitated. The pail of milk trembled in his hands. He set it down mechanically and continued to stare at Nan, muttering plaintively some word that sounded like her own name—"Anabel, Anabel," repeated over and over again.

"It must be that my face, being strange, frightens him," thought Nan. "I hope he will get used to me and like me. He doesn't look like a mindless person. It is as though his mind were asleep, and would wake up. He is

not repulsive. It is the long-neglected hair and beard that give him that wild look. I wish I knew his history, and whether he has always been wrong in his head."

She gave him a glance full of gentleness as she passed him. His eyes were fastened on her, and she wondered at the look in them. It expressed anxious, almost agonized, struggle. Was he trying to say or to remember something that eluded his maimed intelligence?

Presently he shook his head sadly; but he did not offer to move on, though Billy butted gently against his knees by way of reminder.

Rena's treble, as she called to him from half-way up the stairs to "come along," roused him, and he picked up the bucket of milk, and, carrying it carefully, ascended the ladder stairway.

Nan, meantime, was looking about her and enjoying the freshness of the morning and the novel sights and sounds.

Birds were singing and twittering, glancing about on bright wings. Butterflies, some small, others large and gorgeously colored, were hovering over the blossoms that spangled the grass and the vines.

She looked up at the fort. It was almost a mass of vines. Clambering up the sides of the supporting arches and twisting about them were the great, rough brown stems of wild grape vines, the thick, dark-green of the bamboo and the trumpet-vine, together with wild ivy and yellow jasmine. These had overgrown the walls and roof, and the different shades of green, the spikes and clusters of red and yellow blossoms turned the ruined old structure into an object of living beauty.

"Ellen Douglas's lodge on the island in Loch Katrine was not half as romantic as this," said Nan to herself.

Then she looked around her. No large trees obstructed her immediate view. There had been a cleared and cultivated space around the fort in past times. Fruit-trees and melon-vines and vegetables had been planted here. The

forest was fast reclaiming the ground, however. Young paw-paw and pecan and wild plum-trees were growing up into goodly saplings; but here and there among the wild undergrowth were fig and orange and pomegranate-trees, while tomato and melon-vines ran in and out among the bushes, springing from the seed of the fruit that constantly rotted and enriched the ground.

Some ripe figs lay on the ground under a tree close to Nan. They were the first fresh figs she had ever seen. She was soon turning the golden skin of one of them inside out and tasting the red, delicious pulp.

Further on she found a fig-tree of a different species, with large, dark-blue fruit, a rich-looking and luscious variety. She climbed into the low branches and began to fill her basket, throwing some of the fruit to a hen and chickens of the black game species that had been following her about.

All at once as she glanced down she saw a man's tall shadow approaching. She sprung from her perch and confronted Gasker.

The overseer looked even more villainous and bandit-like by daylight than he had seemed last night. His swarthy face was nearly covered with coarse, black beard, his small black eyes gleamed under shaggy brows, his coarse lips parted in a grin that showed his strong, yellow teeth, as Nan stepped back involuntarily, frightened at his sudden and repulsive appearance.

"I won't hurt you," he said. "I've come to take you to te cabin. It's fixed up for you—got nice bed and cheers, an' old nigger woman to cook for you."

"I don't want to go to any cabin," Nan said. "I like the fort, and I want to stay in it while I am on the island."

"Te old fort not fit place for you," he returned. "It old, damp, rotten place, not fit for sweet little chickurn like you. Te cabin nice, cleaned good. No ghos'. I come tere to see how you do ever' day."

He came close to her and grinned down into her face. She stepped back, terrified.

"I will stay here in the fort. I will not go to the cabin," she said, with decision.

His face darkened.

"I make you," he said, threateningly. "I take you up an' car' you, an' shut you up. Tam! I will."

"You have no right to. How dare you take me where I don't want to go?" cried Nan. "I would have you punished for it—the law would punish you."

"Ha, ha!" he laughed. "No law here. How you git te law? Me myself te law on Lost Island. Niggers do like I say. Who you got here to frien' you?"

"She's got *me*!" screamed a shrill voice.

Rena stepped through the bushes. The long shot-gun was in her hand, her beady eyes were shining with excitement.

"I saw you from the fort, I saw you come sneakin' up here, Gasker. She don't want to go with you, and she sha'n't go!"

"I'll show you, tam you!" he muttered. "What's I feared of you for?"

"'Cause you're a coward, and you know it, and you know *I* ain't afeard of *you*. You jes' bring your niggers and try to take Nan Haggard to that cabin and see how many of you'll get hurted. We've got plenty fire-arms and ammynition between us; and us four can hold the fort against you and your niggers—if one of us is innocent an' 'nother one a goat. Try it. You dassent do it!"

She shook her shaggy little head, and she raised and shook the gun, that was taller than herself. Her eyes snapped; she looked ready to spring upon the overseer like an enraged catamount.

Big as he was, it was evident her plucky defiance daunted him. Her threats had their effect. He was furious. He had supposed it would be an easy job to install Nan in

the cabin. He expected to find her passive and humble in her grief-stricken and forlorn condition. He had been stupefied last night by Cora's appearance and the sudden turn of events. He was quite willing, in the emergency, that Rena should take Nan to the fort for the night, but other plans had formed in his brain. He had determined to take Edmund's forsaken bride under his own protection.

"I marry te gal myself," he said to his negro confidant. "She must not go away from te islan'; then I bring Fader Anselmo here some day to tie te knot. I must hab a woman to keep house and sew my clothes. Cora done got married to Edmund tree months ago, she say. I move out and leaf te house to tem, and build anudder house for me and tat nice leetle gal."

"Dat one nice leetle gal for true," responded the negro confidant, as the two lounged on the fence in front of the cabin that was being scoured and fixed up for Nan's occupancy. "But see here, boss, dat gal's powerful spunky. I seed it in her eye las' night. She's a fair filly. 'Spose she say no when you ax her to marry?"

"Ah, ha! I fix all tat. I done broke mustang fillies afore now," returned the overseer, with a grin that displayed his tusk-like teeth.

He had seen that a bed, some chairs and a table had been put into the cabin, and had then hurried to the fort to get Nan, not doubting she would be glad enough to leave the gloomy, bat-haunted ruin. He was taken aback by her refusal to come. He was angry and disappointed. The plan that had been fermenting in his brain during the night had seemed so easy to carry out. If Nan did not show a proper appreciation of his kind attentions, he could try a different treatment. He had once been an overseer of slaves on one of the West India Island sugar farms. He knew the efficacy of a little locking up and starving. This method of breaking into subjection could be easily tried upon Nan, provided she occupied the cabin. There was

no one to prevent him. She was utterly unfriended, and he was master of the island.

But a friend and protector for Nan had sprung up in an unlooked-for quarter.

She refused to leave the fort, and she was backed in her refusal by Rena and her gun, with old Banjo to boot.

Gasker was afraid of "dat little spit-fire—dat little witch's cousin," as the negroes called the dead overseer's daughter. She had always abused him and defied both him and Cora.

He had seen her deadly skill with fire-arms, and he knew, too, that her ally and comrade, Banjo, had the strength of a giant when he was once aroused.

He had felt the weight of his arm in one instance. He was cruelly beating a bound boy he had about the place, and the mild-looking innocent was picking his gourd mandolin as he sat in the sun not far off.

Suddenly Banjo seemed to become aware of what was going on. The child's screams reached his dreamy ear.

He jumped up, his face like a fury's, wrenched the whip from Gasker, and dealt him a blow with the heavy butt that sent him staggering to the ground as though he were shot.

Gasker would have driven Rena and Banjo both from the island if he had dared to, in the face of Selma Brent's injunction that he should never molest these two.

He was furious enough now to jump upon the girl and beat her to death; but he was cowed by her eye and the gun. He shook his fist at her and broke into a foul torrent of cursing.

"Jabber away," she cried, laughing. "Only you keep your distance, and let us alone."

"I not let you lone! Tam! I drive you out tat fort. I *smoke* you out! Tam leetle spit-fire!"

"Smoke, indeed! Smoke your pipe, you ugly wolf!" Rena called after him as he strode away, muttering as he went.

"Oh, Rena, he means to set fire to the fort and burn us up," Nan said.

"Does he? Well, we'll let him try it," answered the girl; but she changed countenance and laughed uneasily.

"Surely Edmund Hoyt ought to have some authority here. I believe I will tell him of Gasker's conduct and his threats," Nan said. "He may have some sense of honor. He hasn't shown any to me; but then he has been acting under his mother's influence. I blame her most for what happened to me. It was her wiles and my own ignorance of the world and romantic notions got out of books. Edmund Hoyt is hardly responsible for what he does."

She was reflecting aloud; but Rena's keen black eyes were watching her closely.

Rena was uneasy. She knew how much they were at the mercy of Gasker. He could make the negroes half drunk, and they would help him to burn them alive in the fort, or to do any other fiendish wrong that hate or passion prompted.

"You could see Edmund to-day, and tell him about Gasker, and ask him to send you away from the island. It *might* do some good," she said. "It all 'pends on Cora. She manages to have her way here. Old Gasker himself is afraid of her temper. He ain't goin' to let you go off the island, for one thing, 'cause Mrs. Brent is to pay him big money to keep you here, and another thing, he's done fixed his eye on you to marry you."

"Hush, Rena!" Nan cried, shivering with disgust. "I am going at once to see Edmund, and to find if I can not get a boat to take me to St. Luke's. I must get away to-day—at once."

"Wait until the sail-boat comes from St. Luke's. It will come to-day. Let's have some breakfast now, and when it's cool this afternoon, we'll go to the white folks' house an' see Edmund."

CHAPTER XXI.

NAN rested through the hot midday in the cool fort, shaded on its sunny side by the great, moss-hung live-oak, and pervious to the sea breeze through its portals and crevices.

Rena kept a lookout through one of these little round port-hole windows for the island's boat, which would probably come from St. Luke's to-day. Sure enough, in the afternoon its white sail was seen to glitter in the sunshine, and shortly after a loud "Halloo!" from the negro boat-hands announced that it had landed at the pier.

"They can't have any excuse that there's no boat to take you away," said Rena. "The 'Heron's' come, and, besides, there's two little row-boats at the landing. You can walk by there and look at 'em. It's time now to get ready to go to the house and have your talk with Edmund. Fix your hair at your little glass. You'll have to face that Cora, and I do want to make her feel small. She thinks she's done a big thing to take Edmund away from you; and I s'pose he thinks you feel cut up about his desertin' you. He's a big enough fool to think it."

They went by the landing and walked out to the end of the pier, where they saw the "Heron," securely fastened inside the boat-house. The two small row-boats were also secured to cypress posts by iron chains and locks.

The big house, or "the white folks' house," as it was called by the negroes on the island, was merely a four-roomed log cottage, with piazzas all around it—rather dilapidated and time-stained. A broken fence, overrun with vines, inclosed a yard full of neglected shrubbery and a few old live-oak-trees, under which were placed benches, while from limbs of one of the trees hung two hammocks.

In one of these Cora lay, fanning herself with a palm

leaf. Edmund was stretched out on a bench just below her, trying to get up a fight between two of the half dozen dogs that surrounded him. Three or four negroes were looking on, for it was Sunday, and they had nothing to do that day but to lounge about, fish and sleep.

They stared at Nan as she came up accompanied by Rena and followed by Banjo, who played with his squirrel and seemed not to notice anything beside.

“But he’ll rouse if we’re bothered, and back us like a good fellow,” Rena said. “We’ll leave Billy to hold the fort; he’s better than a bull-dog. He’ll lie up there, right at the top of the ladder, and if anybody tries to come in that don’t belong there, why, Billy’ll send him about his business with a pain in his stomach!”

An exclamation from the negroes and the bark of the dogs gave warning of the approach of the two girls.

Edmund sprung quickly to a sitting posture, pulled his palmetto hat over his brow, and watched Nan’s approach from under its broad brim. He had the grace to color and look ashamed, though he tried to laugh off his awkward feeling as he said “Good-morning.”

Cora affected to titter mockingly behind her fan.

Edmund was dressed in a light gray suit becoming to his plump, finely molded figure. He looked very handsome in a flesh-and-blood way; but Nan, who had grown years older in the last few days, wondered that she had not seen at first the lack of soul and sense in those well-shaped and well-colored features. It was her own romantic imagination and Selma’s artful cunning that had worked the deception.

She was not at all embarrassed as she stopped before him. Her sense of wrong, her contempt for him, and her earnest purpose to get away from the island, gave her coolness and dignity.

“I suppose you’ve come to blow me up,” Edmund be-

gan. "I s'pose you think you've been treated awful bad. But it ain't my fault; I told Selma—"

Nan interrupted him with a wave of her hand.

"It does not matter whose fault it is," she said. "I did not come here to blow you up, as you call it. I have been treated badly; I have been cruelly deceived by you and your mother. But I do not come here to discuss past treatment; I want to speak about my situation at present. I wish to get away from here as soon as possible—to-day or to-morrow."

"That's against Selma's directions; she charged me and she charged Gasker not to let you go away from here."

"What right had she to give any such charge? What has she to do with me?" Nan began, hotly. But she felt the necessity of controlling herself. She went on more calmly: "There is no reason in my staying on the island. I came here, as you know, in the belief that I was your wife. It is possible your mother had the same belief; if not, she was even a worse woman than I think her to be. I am not your wife, and there is no reason for me to stay here where you are. I do not owe any obedience to you or your mother. What I ask of you is only to furnish me the means to get away; I will pay you for it."

Hoyt did not raise his eyes. He had taken out his pocket-knife, and was whittling a stick. At last he said:

"There's no boat here fit for you to go in. The 'Heron's' all out of fix; they could hardly get her here, and she's got to have the carpenter to work on her."

"There's a small row-boat or two; they would do."

"They leak like all out-of-doors; and, besides, Gasker can't spare his hands from the crop to take you over."

"I will buy the small boat of you, and trust to getting a hand to row me or do the rowing myself."

"I can row as good as any hand Gasker's got," said Rena, making a step forward. "If you'll hire or sell her

one of them little boats, I'll row it to St. Luke's—Banjer and me. If that ain't fair, then I don't know what is."

There was a murmur of assent among the negroes who had listened to the colloquy. It put the finishing touch to Cora's rage. She sprung out of the hammock.

"What's the use of all that mealy mouthed talk, Edmund Hoyt?" she said. "You know what ought to be done and has to be done. It's all in a nutshell. Nan Haggard was sent here by Stephen Brent. He's her guardian. He's supported her all her life. He sent her here because she was too bad a limb to stay at school, and she thought herself too good to work. She wanted to stay in town and be a fine lady, and she hadn't money enough to feed herself. He sent her here, where she can live cheap and can't get into scrapes. He paid her to come, and she agreed to it, and he sent you with her. Now she wants to pretend that you married her; that's all gammon. Stephen Brent is her guardian. She's got to do as he says till she's of age. That's the law. He sent her here, and he ordered that she had to stay here. This island and all that's on it belongs to him; and if anybody helps her to get away, he'll turn 'em off without a cent of pay for their work. Ain't that plain enough for you?" she demanded, turning to the negroes.

Her brazen assertiveness produced the effect she desired. Edmund held up his head, though he did not look at Nan. The negroes, timid and accustomed to being ruled, veered over to the side of authority.

"Sartain. Dat's plain enough." "We ain't goin' to help de gal; 'tain't none of our business." "We ain't gwine agin de boss's orders, dat's sure," were some of the responses.

"All right. Come along, Edmund; let's go to the beach and see the little niggers swim," said Cora; and with a toss of her head in the direction of Nan, she put her hand through Edmund's arm.

The indignant blood flamed in Nan's cheek. She stepped in front of Edmund Hoyt.

"Every word that woman uttered is false, and you know it!" she said. "I was deceived—cruelly deceived—into coming here by your mother and you. I was married to you in the presence of your mother and your step-father—my guardian only in name. I believe that the law will punish this wrong as soon as it is made known. Now hear me: My one wish is to get away from this place. I am intruded upon and insulted here by your overseer and his daughter. I can expect no protection from you, nor do I desire any. I never wish to see your face again. If I am allowed to leave the island at once—given a boat, even if it is only the small row-boat—I will make no complaint, I will be silent as to my wrongs—I will not see or speak to your mother even. She will not know that I have left the island. But if you refuse my request, and basely and dishonorably keep me here against my will, then when I do get away from here—as I shall, for there is a God in heaven to befriend the innocent and helpless—then I will make known my story, and you and your mother shall suffer for the injury you have done me!"

Her clear, refined tones cut like steel, her eyes flashed, her cheeks burned, her beautiful throat swelled with indignation. The negroes looked and listened with wide eyes and open mouths. Even they could see the wide difference between this girl and the coarse, blowsy Cora. Their expressive faces showed it. Edmund felt it too. He looked abashed, ashamed; his eyes acknowledged not only Nan's right, but her superior charm. Cora saw it, and jealousy and innate cruelty overflowed in her breast. She turned upon Nan and burst into a torrent of abuse and threats.

"My father would have been kind to you," she said, "but you abused him, and threatened to kill him—you and that crazy brat you have made your chum, and now

you will have him agin you—hot and heavy. If he does like he ought, you will be locked up and left to starve until you learn to be quiet and humble. You'll have to learn it soon or late, for you'll never get away from this island—never! Mind that, my fine lady."

She was silent, because out of breath, and Nan, ignoring her entirely, turned once more to Edmund and asked if he did not intend to comply with her request to be allowed to leave the island.

"I can't go against my mother's orders," he answered, doggedly, without lifting his eyes. "I ain't master on the island. Stephen Brent put Gasker here to manage things, and Gasker's got orders to keep you here. Stephen Brent is your guardian. You'd better make up your mind to stay here peaceable. Gasker'll fix you up all right. I'm goin' to walk now. I'm tired of so much fuss."

"I shall not make up my mind to stay here peaceably," Nan said, as he walked away. The interview had shown her how useless it was to expect anything from Edmund Hoyt, or from the overseer or his daughter. These two were now her bitter enemies, and she was in their power—a captive on an island that was rarely ever visited.

Still she had hope. She was free as yet, and some boat might come. Oh, it might be the "Curlew" would come to the island! Cyril Thorne, Hartley had said, would stay at St. Luke's a month—and he had his yacht. What more natural than that he would come to the island to see her. He had been so kind. He had seemed to take an interest in her fate. She would look out over the sea every hour in the day for the white sail of the "Curlew." She would signal any vessel she might see. To-morrow might bring escape.

But to-morrow came, and another and another, and no sail came within signaling distance of the island. The dwellers in the old fort kept up a constant watch, not only on the sea, but on the fort itself. They apprehended an

attack instigated by the overseer or his malignant daughter. They remembered Gasker's threat to burn the fort, and Cora's intimation that Nan and her ally would be locked up and starved into submission. So they kept a vigilant lookout and they kept their defensive forces—Banjo, and Billy, the goat—in position: Billy stationed every night at the head of the ladder, just inside the only entrance to the fort, and Banjo with his arms—a stout stick bristling with nails—always in readiness. Rena cleaned up the old gun and the Derringer pistol, and taught Nan how to shoot the latter. These, with a big knife and a hatchet, constituted their armory.

But the necessity for defense seemed indefinitely postponed. The days went by and no attack was made upon the fort. There was no demonstration of violence whatever. Nan began to hope there would be none. The weather was glorious, and she enjoyed rambling about the island, always accompanied by Banjo and his big stick, while Rena stayed to guard the fort. Banjo would not stay when Nan went. He followed her like her shadow. He conceived a strange attachment to her, and was dog-like in his devotion. He would sit and watch her for hours, sometimes shaking his head and muttering inaudibly.

If she cried or seemed troubled, the big tears would roll down his cheeks, and he would not be comforted until she smiled.

Her voice seemed to give him inexpressible pleasure. He would stop playing his monotonous tune upon his gourd banjo whenever she began to speak, and with his eyes upon her face, seem to drink in the music of her utterance.

Nan found this life not unhappy or uncongenial. She loved nature, and was friends with all the bird and animal and insect world. She found many strange bright flowers, gorgeous lilies and tropical orchids, and air plants flourishing in the forks of the forest trees, swinging their rich-

colored blossoms down by wire-like, almost invisible stems. The brilliant butterflies wavering in the sunshine on their big spotted wings, the large fireflies that lighted up the misty night with their flying torches, the many strange birds and water-fowl with their novel songs, and cries, and queer nests, all these furnished her with endless entertainment.

She found Rena a source of constant interest. The girl was very bright and quick. She could read a little, and the two overhauled the old green baize book-case and read the old books in musty leather covers. Nan had the rare natural gift—trained by Mrs. De Lacy—of reading beautifully. Her voice was at once sympathetic and musical, and as she read at night by Rena's home-made wax-candles or her little tin kerosene lamp, or when it was damp and chill, by the ruddy light of a pine torch, she had an attentive audience in Rena and Banjo, to say nothing of Billy chewing his cud reflectively at his post.

So the days and nights went by, and no harm came to the inmates of the old fort. Once or twice Gasker crossed her path, but he did not speak to her. He looked at her in a way that made a chill creep through her, and caused her to walk nearer to her protector, Banjo.

Twice, too, she happened to meet Edmund alone. Indeed, the meeting was not by chance on his part. He had evidently sought her and followed her. Once he spoke to her and made some flattering remark. Undaunted by her look of contempt, he came close to her as she sat on the mossy trunk of a fallen tree inspecting the curiously woven nest of an oriole.

"You're as pretty as a picture," he said. "You get prettier every day. You're enough sweeter-looking than Cora, and I like you best. It's all her mean temper. She's such a wildcat, I'm tired of her."

"That is nothing to me," Nan said, quietly. "I wish you would let me alone. I want nothing of you, except

the keys that unlock the boat-house and the boats. Give them to me for a few minutes and I will thank you and forget all the injury you have done me."

"The keys are in Gasker's pocket, and you'll never get them. You'd better make up your mind to that. If you would be sweet to me and let me kiss you as you ought to, because I was married to you all right, I'd manage to get the keys, and we'd run away together and leave Cora behind. You're mad with me now, but you love me. I know you do, don't you, now?"

He tried to take her hand. She drew it away indignantly, and Banjo, who was watching her, as usual, started up, and with a threatening growl made a step toward Edmund. The big, cowardly creature slunk away without another word to Nan, though he turned around and cursed Banjo when he was out of reach of his stick.

That was an unlucky day for Nan. It was unfortunate that she was looking so very pretty to-day. Rena had begged her to wear a little white muslin gown, simple but graceful in its sheer soft folds. A belt of blue ribbon confined it at the waist, and she wore on her curly head a palmetto hat of Rena's manufacture, with a blue ribbon around it. In this simple costume Nan looked like a woodland nymph. Edmund told the truth when he said she had grown lovelier. Her figure had gathered fuller outlines; her little oval face was a perfect curve from brow to chin; her eyes had a deeper, sweeter charm. The girl had grown almost into womanhood through the unfolding power of emotion and trial.

She was returning to the fort with her basket full of wild plums and a string of perch from the pond, when she encountered Gasker. He stepped out of the bushes and spoke to her and walked beside her. She knew it was bad policy to anger him, so she treated him with gentle politeness until he began to make love to her; then she repulsed him with a disgust she could not help showing, and he

turned upon her with rage and passion in his ugly face and bid her beware how she put on airs, for she was in his power. He had let her alone, thinking she would come to her senses, but he would now show her that he was master here, and could make her suffer for rejecting his proffered kindness.

"I make you cry 'pity, pity' on your knees to me," he said, as he shook his hairy fist almost in her face. As he did this, Banjo aimed a blow at him with his stick, which he dodged.

"I'll settle you too, you tam ijot!" he said, as he strode away.

Banjo would have followed him, but Nan would not permit him. He obeyed her slightest look. He seemed to have no idea of the nature of the attempts to intrude upon his lily-white little mistress. He seemed not to understand a word that was spoken, but he watched her face with his hazy, dreamy eyes, as a dog watches the face it loves, and as soon as he saw from its expression that she was being made angry or unhappy, he was ready to spring upon the one who had caused her to be troubled.

Nan gave Rena an account of her day's adventures that night as they eat the supper she had helped to provide. Rena laughed and looked grave by turns.

"He means mischief, that Gasker," she said. "We must look out for him."

CHAPTER XXII.

WHEN Nan woke next morning she heard the birds singing, but she missed the monotonous music of Banjo's mandolin. She found out what was the matter when she left her room. Rena was moving about noiselessly, getting breakfast ready, and she told Nan, in low tones, that Banjo was suffering from one of his periodic attacks of pain in the head.

These were not ordinary headaches. They were due to some abnormal condition of his brain. His sufferings at these times, as Rena told Nan, and as she soon saw for herself, were intense. He bore them heroically. Only the ghastly pallor of his face, his livid, trembling lips, and his eyes full of dumb agony and child-like supplication, told how fierce was the torture that racked his brain.

He seemed to find his best comfort in having Nan sit beside him and feeling her touch upon his head. Nothing but rest and quiet could relieve him, Rena said. She would try to make him sleep. Accordingly she made a poultice out of dried herbs she took from a little bag of skin, and applied it to his head. Then she gave him a spoonful of some mixture she poured from one of the little bottles in her medicine-chest. This medicine-chest contained a number of medicaments, manufactured by her father, whose life in the wilds—part of the time among Indians—had made him familiar with the healing virtues of herbs, roots and barks. These he boiled down to their last essence, and sealed in vials with air-tight stoppers.

But it required more than one dose of the juice of poppy and mandagora to relieve Banjo. He was almost convulsed with pain, and it was late in the afternoon, and after another dose of the anodyne, that he fell into a sleep so profound that it resembled coma.

“Go out and get some cool air,” Rena said to Nan. “He will sleep now like the dead for three or four hours.”

Nan tied on her palmetto hat and took her away to the beach, carrying in her arms Banjo’s squirrel, lest the restless little creature should disturb his master’s sleep.

What was her delight, on coming near the beach, to see the sun glinting on a white sail not far off. The vessel looked like Dr. Thorne’s yacht, the gallant little “Curlew.” She was slowly approaching the island, tacking to catch the light and changeable breeze.

Nan clapped her hands with joy.

"Now I shall be rescued! Now we shall get away from the island, with its dreadful people," she said to the squirrel, squeezing him rapturously in her arms until he uttered an indignant squeal.

She did not see Gasker, who sat behind a clump of palmettoes watching her, as he had been watching the vessel before Nan ran down to the beach.

"You'll git away, will you?" he muttered to himself. "We'll see about that!"

Nan hurried back to the fort and called Rena. Her excited tones made the girl run down the ladder to join her, and the two went back to the shore to watch the progress of the yacht, and to signal to her if she seemed disposed not to land.

But she was evidently heading directly for the island, and it was not thought necessary to wave the white apron Nan had untied from her waist and fastened to a long reed.

The two girls sat down under a cedar-tree and waited, half afraid to leave the beach, lest the yacht might not come. Her progress was slow, because there was hardly a breath of wind. She was still more than a mile away when Rena turned to Nan suddenly, and said:

"We left the fort without a bit of guard. Banjo is as good as dead, his sleep is so sound; and there is Billy—he followed us here. I forgot to tell him to stay at his post. I feel like something is wrong. I remember, now, I heard a rustling in the bushes by the fort."

She rose to her feet as she spoke, and looked in the direction of her abode.

"It's on fire—the fort's on fire!" she screamed. "See the smoke!"

"And Banjo is asleep inside!" cried Nan, as she too saw the smoke rising in a thick volume above the trees.

The girls ran to the spot with breathless speed. The

fort was on fire inside. The thatched roof, the straw-covered floor, the reed and palm-leaf partitions, they were burning like tinder.

"The ladder is gone," cried Rena. "Gasker has taken it away. He wanted Banjo to burn up. Banjo won't wake before the smoke suffocates him. Banjo! Banjo!" she cried; but only the crackling flames made answer.

Nan did not speak. She felt in an instant that Banjo, stupefied by the drug he had taken, would not escape by his own exertions. "I must save him," she said. He had taken a strange hold upon her heart. "He would die to save me, I know. He must not burn up."

She looked up at the ruined pile, with the quick, intent glance of one who forms a sudden purpose. The fort, in its dismantled condition, was about twenty feet high. The only windows were port-holes too small for even her slender body to creep through; but she might reach the roof—one side of the thatch had not yet caught fire. She could spring through it to the floor. She might be in time to arouse and save her poor, half-witted friend. As the hope flashed through her brain, she flung the shoes from her feet. She caught hold of one of the vines that covered the wall from bottom to top and began to climb one of the arches that supported the main structure.

She was used to climbing. She had rivaled the squirrels in mounting hickory-nut-trees in the woods at Haggard Creek. But the climbing here was more difficult. It was a desperate scramble. But she set the clinging toes of her little feet in among the net-work of vines and branches, and before these gave way she had secured a footing elsewhere, her fingers clutching meanwhile the vines and branches above her head.

Rena watched her in breathless terror.

Gasker ran up and called to her to stop, to come down.

"What you try to do?" he shouted. "It is too late.

Te place is all fire inside. You not live in tere one minnit. Let te crazy dog burn up. He's no good."

He tried to make her fall back into his arms by grasping and shaking the vine to whose upper branches she was clinging with hands and feet. But she clung fast and climbed quickly, recklessly. Her aim was to reach a limb of the live-oak-tree that overhung the roof. Smaller branches of the oak came within her reach. She caught them and swung herself up, finding an instant's footing wherever she was able.

At last her foot was on the limb that stretched half-way across the roof. It was almost horizontal, and she walked lightly upon it until she was over the blazing roof. A cry went up from those below. They saw her spring upon the roof—it seemed to them right among the flames—but she had found a part which was not yet afire. The light-thatch gave away as she sprung up it, and she went through down to the floor, eight feet beneath, landing unhurt, but in the midst of blinding smoke and the still burning straw that covered the floor.

The light partitions were crackling and blazing; the puncheon floor was catching fire in places; the pungent smoke was suffocating; the roof overhead was being rapidly consumed, and the burned fragments were falling in a fiery shower.

Were was Banjo? She could neither see nor hear, for the smoke blinded her eyes, the roaring of the fire filled her ears.

CHAPTER XXIII.

"BANJO! Banjo!" she cried, groping blindly to find the spot by one of the small windows where they had left him asleep. "Banjo!" she cried again, her tones full of anguish, as the smoke choked her utterance and the heat of the still burning straw blistered her feet.

A groan answered her. Guided by it, she made a step in its direction and stretched out her hands. They touched a crouching body. She seized his shoulder and cried to him to get up and come with her. He did not stir—he only moaned. He was half insensible through the suffocating smoke and the anodyne he had taken. An inspiration came to Nan. She stooped down quickly.

“For Anabel’s sake!” she cried into his deadened ear.

That name seemed to waken his benumbed senses. He staggered to his feet. She dragged him in the direction of the opening in the floor that had served as a door. She had seen it through the smoke. It was but a second before they reached it, but it seemed many minutes to Nan.

“Jump!” she cried, and gave him a gentle push. “Save yourself for Anabel’s sake!”

He obeyed her. He sprung from the opening. She saw him fall on his hands and knees to the ground below. He might be jarred by the shock, but the height was not great enough to kill him.

Then she herself made the leap. She was half strangled with smoke. She was hardly conscious through excitement and pain, but as she gathered her strength together and jumped from the edge of the trap-door, she saw, with a feeling of sickening horror, Gasker standing below, his feet planted firmly, and his arms extended to receive her.

“Tam brave gal!” he cried, as he caught her in his strong clasp.

She felt his bristly mustache brush her cheek, she felt his breath on her face; his yellow-black eyes danced before her like the flames that had just surrounded her. She struggled feebly to free herself, then her head fell back from his encircling arm. She had swooned away.

Gasker bore her from beneath the burning building out among the group of negroes, big and little, that had gathered in front of it. In this group of black faces appeared two that were white—Edmund’s and Cora’s. Edmund

looked pale and frightened; Cora had given her father one keen, significant glance, which said, "I know this is your doing. You are only playing into my hands."

But even she looked concerned when the overseer, carrying the insensible girl in his arms, joined the group.

"Is she dead?" asked Edmund, in quaking tones.

"I don't know. She has a fit," he answered. "Bring my horse here," to one of the negroes. "He's yonder, tied in the bushes. I take her where she can be 'tended to."

"Not to your cabin—don't take her there," broke in Rena. "Oh, take her yonder to the landing! A vessel's at the landing. Put her on board of it. They will take her to St. Luke's, where she can have good attention."

Gasker paid no heed to her. The negro had brought the horse; he gave Nan's insensible form to him to hold until he leaped into the saddle. Then he took her into his own arms, and in a second he had disappeared, riding at a rapid pace through the bushes in the direction of the cabin.

Rena ran after him. She looked around for her ally, but Banjo, dazed and seeming only half conscious, sat on the grass in the place to which they had dragged him. She looked toward the sea, but the bushes and trees hid the beach from her view. She could not tell whether the "Curlew"—if indeed it was she—had landed.

As she looked, the roof of the fort fell in with a crash. Hardly twenty minutes had passed since the fire was discovered, but all the more combustible part of Rena's home had been burned, and now the floor of solid cypress punch-eons was in flames. Soon nothing would be left of the old structure but a fragment of the coquina walls, perhaps even they would crumble before the heat and become a mere heap of ashes and ruins, which nature would soon overgrow with moss and vines.

Rena thought, with a pang, of the destruction of her cherished relics—those bits of old furniture and books that

her parents had left her—her sole possessions. But her anxiety for Nan outweighed all other feelings, and she ran fast after the overseer, thinking, as she went:

“As soon as I see she is comin’ out of the fit, I’ll run to the landing and tell Doctor Thorne she is here and she wants to go away, then if Gasker tries to keep her, why, he’ll get the worst of it.”

But, fast as she ran, she did not overtake the overseer until he had stopped in front of a double-roomed log-cabin, larger and better built than the others, seen here and there among the trees at a little distance.

He was carrying Nan into the house. He had laid her on the bed when Rena came up breathless. At a glance she saw that life was coming back to the sweet face she loved. The color was beginning to show in Nan’s cheek, and her lids trembled. Presently her eyes flashed open.

“She all right now. I go get some water for her,” Gasker said.

Nan’s quick eyes went around the strange room, and rested on Rena’s face. For an instant she was bewildered; then she recollected.

“I jumped from the fort while it was afire—I and Banjo. Where am I now? Is Banjo safe?”

“Banjo’s safe, and you—you had a faintin’ fit,” Rena answered, “and he—Gasker—brought you here.”

“Gasker!” A strong shudder ran through her. “Oh, I remember, he caught me as I jumped, then I lost my senses. Oh, why did I faint? And he brought me here? Is this his house? Let us get out of it at once,” she cried, starting up. “Let us run to the landing. The vessel is there. It is not too late.”

She sprung from the bed and they both ran to the door. It was shut. They tried to open it. In vain. It was fastened from the outside. Gasker had locked them in.

Rena darted to the window; there was only one. It had

strong, thick bars of wood nailed across it on the outside. They were prisoners in Gasker's cabin.

Nan, already shaken and unnerved by the ordeal she had passed through, dropped upon the bed and began to cry in despair and weariness. Rena tried to cheer her, though her own hopes were faint.

"The people in the boat will ask about you, and find out and come to your help," she said.

"Who will tell them the truth? The negroes dare not; the others wouldn't, of course," answered Nan. "Only a few minutes more and we would have been saved. If we had not left the beach until the boat came!"

"Then Banjo would have been burned up. You saved his life," said Rena, "and your feet are all blistered, and your face is scorched and black with the smoke. Let me bathe it for you. Here is some water. Let's pluck up courage. Don't give up yet. A heap of things may happen."

There was plenty of water and some towels in the room. The bed was clean, and there was some attempt at comfort in the matting on the floor—the table with a few books upon it, and another table on which was a bottle of wine and some cakes and fruit.

"They are not going to starve us yet, it seems," said Rena, as she bathed Nan's face and hands in the cool water, and brushed her disordered curls. "Eat somethin' to keep up your strength. I believe in eatin'; it helps every time. These cakes is good," she went on, helping herself, and pouring out a glass of the golden-colored wine for Nan.

Nan could do little more than taste it, and eat a few figs. Even this slight refreshment made her feel better, and when Rena saw that her pale face looked brighter, she sat down by her on the edge of the bed, and said:

"Now we'll talk what we must do. Gasker's got us in a trap. We can't git out of the door, for it's fast locked,

and we can't git out of the winder, 'cause them bars is strong as iron. It's no use hollerin', for there's nobody to come to our help. The niggers dassent come, and Cora wouldn't let Edmund budge, if he wanted to."

"I know all that," said Nan, gloomily. "I see no chance for escape. What do you think Gasker will do next?"

"He will take me out of this room and lock me up somewhere else. He hadn't a chance this time. He was afeard I'd run to the landin', and tell of your bein' here. He will shut you up here by yourself and try to starve you into takin' up with his terms—and them terms will be, to give up tryin' to git away, and to marry him."

"I would die first!" cried Nan, with horror on her white face.

"Starvin' is a mighty hard death," said Rena; "but don't you give up. Let's try to play fox to this wolf. Let's play 'possum, I mean. You know what the 'possum does when he gets caught in a trap?"

"No," answered Nan, listlessly.

"He makes out he is dead, and they open the trap and kick him about, thinkin' he's jes' a carcass, and when they're not lookin', he jumps up and away he goes. Now, why can't you make out you will give in to Gasker? Tell him you'll marry him to-morrow; pretend you're thankful for his kindness, and all that, and then he'll make 'em bring you a good supper, and you ask him to eat with you—and talk and be mighty entertainin', and then—do you see this here?"

She took a small bottle out of her pocket.

"It's the stuff I give Banjer that made him sleep so. It's powerful strong. Pappy said too big a dose would knock a man's pegs from under him in no time. Well, old Gasker's a great hand for coffee, and while you're talkin' to him and smilin' at him, I'll manage to pour a dose into his cup—not too big a dose—though he deserves

every drop in the bottle. He'll go to sleep and I'll git the keys out of his pocket—the boat keys and all. Now do you think you can play 'possum?"

"Yes, yes," cried Nan, hope springing up in her breast. "If we can get out and get the boat, I will trust to our being able to row it somewhere, or to its drifting out on the waves—anywhere—so it is away from Lost Island."

"But Banjo," she said, an instant after; "we must not leave Banjo."

"We will try to find him. If he is able, he will find us. He scents out things same as a dog. But if we can't find him, we can send back—"

She stopped, and clutched Nan's hand with a warning pressure, for the key was heard turning in the lock.

"Remember, you're to play 'possum," she said.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE door opened just wide enough to admit the tall, gaunt form of the overseer. No sooner was he inside than he shut and locked the door. Then he came up to Nan, who sat on the edge of the bed, her heart beating with fear, which she strove with all her might to conceal.

The man who approached her looked like some creature half beast, half demon. A look of cunning triumph gleamed in his eyes—a leer of sensual satisfaction curled his hairy lips, and exposed two yellow, fang-like teeth.

"So you haf come from out your faintin' fit," he said to Nan. "You was not mooch hurt? It haf not spoiled your beautee."

"My hair was wet with the bath I had just taken, and it was all over my face and kept it from being scorched. My feet were blistered a little, but Rena has bathed them and they do not pain me much," Nan answered, looking up at him pleasantly.

He was amazed at the cheerfulness of her reply. He stared at her a second, and then his eyes dropped, and he said, in some confusion:

“I hope you find things comfort’ble here.”

“Yes, very comfortable, except that you deprive us of our liberty.”

“Eh?”

“Why do you lock us up like prisoners? We are your guests.”

“My guests?—hah!—I not a fool—my birds fly away if liefie open te cage.”

“If birds are well treated they won’t fly away,” Nan said, forcing herself to smile into his horrible face.

“I treat you well, little bird. I hold you in my hand—I lofe you—I kiss your little red bill.”

He stooped over her until his breath, foul with whisky and tobacco, was hot on her cheek. He put his arms around her shoulders and tried to draw her to him. It required all Nan’s courage and self-control to keep from letting him see the disgust and terror he inspired. She quietly drew herself from his embrace, and, standing a little way off, looked him full in the face.

“You must not do that again,” she said. “You must not try to kiss me until we are married. It is not nice—it is not right. It will make me dislike you—and you want your wife to like you, do you not?”

He stared at her in blank amazement. Her gentle dignity, her firm, quiet words, did more to rebuff him than the bitterest abuse she could have used.

“You are one good girl,” he said, at last; “you make good wife. I lofe you mooch more.” Then, as a sudden suspicion seized him, he glanced at Rena, then back again at Nan in a sharp, suspicious way. “You not playin’ one trick on me?” he asked. “You too mighty sweet all at once—you hate me ’while ago.”

“It was because you did not treat me right. It is kind-

ness that makes us love people. Will you be kind to me—will you respect me, and will you let us two poor girls have our liberty?”

“I let you haf your libertee when you be my wife. That be soon—that be to-morrow. To-morrow I send for te priest. You be my sweet little wife,” chuckling with delight as he again bent over her. She could not quite hide the shudder that passed through her. He gave a quick glance of suspicion. “If you gif consent, that is good; if you not gif consent, then you mine all the same—mine, fast and sure,” he added, as he looked around the room.

“I have not said that I would not consent,” Nan said, warned by a look from Rena. “I only wished you to promise that you would respect my feelings until then. I said I could not love a man that did not respect my wishes.”

He frowned with vexed impatience, and made a step toward her; but the look in her eyes, her quiet, firm tones, held him back. With a short laugh, he said:

“I promise.”

“Thank you,” Nan said, smiling gently.

“As soon as sun up I send to St. Luke for Fader Anselmo,” he went on.

“Father Anselmo is a drunken brute; he will do anything for money. I don’t believe he is a sure-enough priest,” Rena whispered. Then she said, aloud: “And we’ll have a weddin’ and a weddin’-feast! I wish it was to-night, for I am, oh! so hungry. That little snack just makes me want more. You are just famished, I know?” to Nan.

“I would like to have some good coffee,” Nan said, returning Rena’s lead. “Can’t you bring us some and take a cup here with us?” she said, beaming on Gasker.

“Sartain sure,” he answered, promptly. “Supper is cooked. I bring somet’ing to you.”

He went out, locking the door after him.

“Now let’s set our heads together,” said Rena, sinking her voice. “Speak low. He may listen at the keyhole. You played your part well. Once I thought you would break down, but you didn’t. Keep it up. Talk to him as if it was all right, and you had give in to marry him. After I git him to drink the dose we must keep him here till he goes to sleep on the lounge there. We must tell him tales like that princess in the story that was in one of mother’s old books, burnin’ up this minute in the poor dear old fort. The princess told tales to her husband every night to make him forget to cut off her head—he cut off all his wives’ heads. She spun one big yarn after another to save her life, and so must we. Keep in good heart. Don’t give up. We’ll make the trial, and maybe the good man above will help us. Folks say He looks after the sparrows. We need lookin’ after as bad as any sparrows I ever see. Hush! he’s comin’. Wipe your eyes and look gay as a cricket.”

The key turned in the lock, and the door opened wide enough to admit Gasker. Through the crack a pair of black arms were seen handing in to him a tray, upon which were some cups and dishes, a pot of coffee and a plate of hot buttered corn muffins. He set the tray on a table, locked the door, and then pushed the table further into the room.

“Here’s your supper,” he said. “Bettar as we can do to-night. You shall have chick’n and omilet to-morrow morn.”

“This is splendid!” Rena cried, as she placed at the table the two chairs the room afforded and pushed up the lounge, telling Gasker to sit there and make himself comfortable.

Nan sat on one of the chairs, and Rena was perched on the other. She poured out the coffee, which was rich and fragrant. Nan called Gasker’s attention to a blister on her wrist, and while he was examining the burn and fond-

ling her pretty little hand, Nan was trembling all over, and her cheeks flushing and paling, for a side glance showed her that Rena was pouring half the remaining contents of the little black bottle into Gasker's cup. What if he should detect her? What if he should decline to drink the coffee? What if the drug should fail of its effect, or if the effect did not take place until after he had left them—after he had locked the door upon his prisoners?"

"Drink your coffee, folks," exclaimed Rena. "It's mighty good."

She sipped hers with a relish, and munched a buttered muffin.

Gasker lifted the cup to his mouth, gave his mustache a side pull right and left, and tasted the coffee. He set the cup down, saying:

"It too bittar."

A cold chill ran down Nan's spine.

"I will put some more sugar in it," Rena said, quickly.

She dropped a big lump of sugar into the cup. Gasker stirred it well, then put it to his lips, and tasted it still with dissatisfaction.

"Coffee burnt—roasted too much, make bittar taste," he said. But he finally drank the last drop. It was very evident he did not dream the coffee had been tampered with.

Nan and Rena were alternately hot and cold with excitement. But they remembered that only the first part of their plan had been carried out. They must induce the overseer to go to sleep in this room.

Nan plunged into story-telling. It was her forte. She told all the anecdotes she could remember.

Gasker listened, interested, and laughed sometimes—that peculiar, gurgling chuckle.

The laugh grew languid after awhile, and then he yawned.

How glad they were to see that yawn. Presently his

lids grew heavy. They would drop together occasionally, but he would lift them again and make some remark.

The two girls watched him in anxious suspense. Their one hope lay in the drug taking effect and making their jailer sleep so soundly that he would not wake when the keys were abstracted from his pocket. They could see the bulging shape of the keys and hear their jingle occasionally.

The hope of being rescued by Cyril Thorne had been crushed by the story the overseer had told of how the "meddlesome fools" on that vessel had been rebuffed by Cora.

After he, Gasker, had carried Nan from the fort, Edmund, Cora and the negroes had gone to a point near the beach to see the "Curlew" land.

A boy came from the vessel with a package of books. They were for Mrs. Hoyt, he said, sent by the master of the "Curlew," who hoped she was well and happy.

"Perfectly well and happy, tell him," said Cora, promptly, "and not in need of any books from him."

The boy went back with the books and the message.

The "Curlew" sailed a few minutes later.

Nan knew that Thorne must have thought the message came from her. He did not know of Cora's presence on the island. He saw a woman standing by Edmund, leaning her hand on his shoulder—Cora's favorite attitude. She was too far off, and there were too many intervening bushes for her face or figure to be seen very plainly. He believed she had sent the unkind message, and he had gone and left her to her fate.

That hope was destroyed. There was now only one possibility of escape before to-morrow would rivet her chains by making her Gasker's wife.

No wonder she watched the hideous face of her jailer with wild anxiety.

He continued to yawn, his lids fell together more frequently. At last he got up.

"I don't know what make me so tam sleepee," he said. "I b'lief I go to bed. I kiss you good-night—on your hand, my leetle Nan. I forget not my promise."

Nan and Rena looked at each other in blank dismay. What must be done?

Suddenly a thought flashed like an inspiration into Nan's brain.

"Oh, you must not go until you have heard me sing," she said. "Sit down a moment and hear me sing one little song."

"I will with pleasure," he said, and he dropped back upon the lounge.

Nan began to sing. She modulated her fresh, delicious voice to a soft, tender cadence.

He lay on the lounge and listened, moving his head like an emotional donkey whose big ears wave in rhythm with the music of instruments.

Nan sung a lullaby full of swaying, soothing melody. It completed the charm. Long before it had ended Gas-ker was asleep. She still sung on, however, until his deep breathing and at last his unmistakable snore was music to her ears.

Another sound gave her a thrill of joy. As she sung, her ear caught the familiar thrum-thrum of Banjo's gourd mandolin. It had come with him safe from the fire, being hung around his neck by a ribbon Nan had given him.

Banjo was outside, probably seated on the steps of the cabin. He had heard her singing, and recognized her voice. This was his answer—his mandolin.

"We will take him with us," she whispered, joyfully, to Rena.

The overseer now lay perfectly motionless and silent, except for his heavy breathing. Rena went to him and stooped over him. Then she lightly shook his shoulder. He did not stir. The drug had been long in taking effect, but now its power seemed complete. He did not move or

show any sign of waking when Rena took out of his pocket first the key of the room they were in and then a bunch of keys of different sizes.

"We shall have to try those to see which one unlocks the boat," she whispered to Nan as she put the bunch in her pocket. "Now, you listen at the window and I'll listen at the door to find if anybody is stirrin'. It's late; it must be nigh midnight."

There was no noise outside except the chirping of the insects, Banjo's monotonous note, and the sound of some one snoring in the little hall.

Rena took the loose key, fitted it into the lock, turned it softly, and then as softly opened the door a little, and again looked and listened.

Nan, with a thought of Banjo, gathered up the fragments of the supper. Rena ran to the bed, snatched off a sheet, rolled it up tightly, and hid it under her skirt.

"Come," she whispered, as she blew out the candles.

In another instant the two girls were outside the door. In the hall they heard the snoring and saw the doubled-up, sleeping form of the negro, Gasker's body-servant. They found Banjo seated on the step. A touch upon his shoulder brought him to his feet, with an exclamation of delight, smothered by the pressure of Rena's hand over his mouth. He looked up joyfully into Nan's face, saying softly: "Anabel! Anabel!" almost the only word he ever uttered.

"Hush! come with us," whispered Nan, giving him her hand. He pressed it against his breast, and she felt there a soft lump that she knew was Dicky, his squirrel, nestled under his coat. So Dicky was safe. She remembered that she had him with her when the fire broke out in the fort.

The trio moved noiselessly away from the house. Rena struck out for the beach, but she thought best to take a course that did not bring her so near the negro cabins with

the keen-scented hounds. They skirted around these safely—all but the last one. Here two dogs ran out and began barking loudly. The cabin door opened, and a voice called out:

“Who’s dar?”

Rena made a hurried sign for Nan and Banjo to stop where they were, in the shadow of some thick-leaved trees. The barking continued, and the voice again demanded:

“Who’s dar? What you doin’ roun’ here dis time ob night? I’ll shoot if yer don’t answer!”

They were crouching down in the shadow, and the dogs were advancing half hesitatingly—for they were cowardly mongrels—and keeping up a barking that threatened to alarm the negro quarter.

“Now’s the time for my sheet!” said Rena.

Unrolling the sheet as she sat on the ground, she enveloped Banjo in it from head to foot.

“Now rise up quick,” she said, “and step outer the shadow.”

She took his hand, and guided his movements according to her will.

He rose up, his full figure wrapped in the sheet from head to foot, and stepped out into the starlight, Rena and Nan close by him on the side furthest from the investigating darky in the cabin door.

“Wave your arm, Banjo,” said Rena, giving his right arm an upward push. At the same time she broke into a wild banshee wail.

They heard a frightened ejaculation, and the figure at the door disappeared. The door was slammed to, and the rattling of iron links told that it was being fastened with the chain and padlock. A whistle, sounded through the crack of the house, called off the dogs, who, indeed, had tucked their tails as soon as they saw the white apparition and heard the ghostly wail.

“We’re safe from him, certain sure!” said Rena, chuck-

ling. "He'll cover up in bed, head and all, and say his prayers till he drops to sleep. Let's get to the landing quick; the coast is clear for us now."

In a few minutes the landing was reached. The tide was on the ebb. They went out to the end of the pier, and saw the "Heron" at anchor a little way off. She was too big and unwieldy for them to manage. The small boat was their only chance. There were two of these fastened by iron chains and padlocks to the cypress posts of the pier. Rena examined both as closely as she could, picked out the one that looked most seaworthy, and hastily bailed it out with the tin pail that floated in the water in the bottom, while Nan found the key and unlocked the chain that fastened the boat to its mooring.

"Take your seat here, Nan; I'll show you how to handle the steerin'-paddle. Banjer and me will set here and row; Banjo can pull an oar as good as anybody," said Rena. "This boat is leaky; Edmund told the truth about it—which is a thing he don't often do—but t'other boat's worse, and we'll bail the water out as fast as it runs in. Ten miles ain't far to go, and there's a lot of little islands between here and St. Luke's. We'll git somewhere, I hope."

They took their places in the boat. Rena put Banjo in the seat beside her, and placed an oar in his hand.

"Now for it!" she said, and shoved the boat out into deep water.

They were afloat, under the night sky, in a little leaky boat.

CHAPTER XXV.

THE wind was in their favor, but the tide was against them. It was rising, though the flow had not set in strongly.

They soon found there was one thing more opposed to

their progress than the tide. This was the condition of the boat. It leaked dreadfully, requiring hard work and quick movements on Nan's part to keep it bailed out.

Still the progress they made was encouraging, and their spirits were high.

Nan felt she had a heart for any fate now that Lost Island was left behind, and she was free of Edmund Hoyt and the still more horrible overseer. So she bailed away with a will, and sung snatches of song as she worked.

Banjo, too, seemed wild with joy. He broke out into exclamations of pleasure, and he rowed with such vigorous strokes that Rena presently gave both oars to him and took the steering paddle, leaving Nan free to bail the constantly leaking craft.

They were making good speed; the wind, refreshingly cool, was in their favor, and the starlit night was clear.

The frail condition of the boat gave them their only anxiety. All went well, however, and they had left the island several miles behind, when suddenly the keel of the boat grated upon a coral reef. A plank of the rotten bottom was pushed in, and water rushed into the boat in a gurgling stream.

Bailing was of no avail. The water poured in, the boat filled quickly, and, slipping off from the sharp, narrow reef, sunk in deep water, leaving its little crew struggling in the sea.

Nan could not swim at all. She sunk at once. When she arose she felt herself grasped by a strong arm, set upon her feet, and held in that position on the oyster reef, with the water nearly to her waist. It was Banjo who supported her. She drew her drenched hair from her face and looked around for Rena. She saw her close by. Her arms and shoulders and her little, pale, scared face appeared above the water in the dim light.

"You are there, thank God!" exclaimed Nan. "Oh, what shall we do now?"

Rena was silent. Nan heard her catch her breath with a sobbing gasp. It was now her turn to try to cheer her comrade.

"It will soon be day," she said. "A boat may come along then, or some time during the day. We shall not drown while we stand here where the water is shallow."

"It won't be shallow here long," Rena said, gloomily. "The tide is rising; when it is high, the water on the reef will be over our heads."

"Then we must drown, unless a boat comes to our rescue before the sun rises."

"Yes."

Nan felt her heart stand still, as though already grasped by the cold hand of death. She must die so soon, and she was so young, and hope was so sweet. She was not to see another sunrise.

"Is there no chance for our lives?" she asked Rena.

"If it were only day, or there was a moon, so I could see if we were nigh any land, I could swim to it, and bring help," answered the girl. "There's little islands scattered all about. We may be nigh to some of 'em, if we only knowed."

"We might call for help; some one might hear us," said Nan, feeling that there was scarcely a shadow of hope in the suggestion; but a wave more towering than the rest had just broken against her chest, scattering its spray in her face. She felt the arm of Banjo tighten around her. She felt that he understood her peril, and that he meant to assure her he would never desert her. He would die trying to save her, that she knew.

"Let us holler, then, as loud and long as we can," said Rena. Drawing a long breath, she sent forth a shrill cry across the waste of waters. "Help! help! help!"

Their united voices sent out that short but all-comprehensive appeal—the cry that has so often been borne

across the destroying waves from the lips of suffering or imperiled humanity.

They stopped, breathless, to listen. For a minute there was no sound but the ripple of the waves, those cruel waves that were creeping up to engulf them. Then—

“Listen!” cried Rena, joyfully.

It was not a human voice replying to their cry, it was the bark of a dog. It sounded as though it came from a good distance, but not so far as Lost Island, and from an opposite direction.

Once more the two girls sent forth the shrill, far-reaching cry of “Help!” Another silence, broken by the renewed barking of the dog, then a light flashed out, looking so like a falling star that for an instant the girls doubted if indeed it were a light. It flickered, seemed to go out, then shone again.

Rena made a speaking-trumpet of her hands and threw all the strength of her lungs into another cry. Another and another. Was that an answering shout coming faintly through the night above the murmur of the rising tide? Or was it only fancy quickened by hope? The light still flickered, however, and the two girls renewed their call for help.

“It’s somethin’,” said Rena. “The light and the dog’s bark shows there’s somethin’ there—a vessel or an island. I think it’s a boat of some sort. They’ve heard us, maybe, but they don’t understand it’s a cry for help. If we could only make a light. We can’t wait; the tide’s risin’ awful fast. I’m going to swim to’rds the light. You keep hollerin’. It’ll guide me if I have to swim back; but I’m going to find that light, if the Blessed Virgin’ll give me strength. Good-bye. Keep up heart.” She seized Nan’s hand and squeezed it hard. “We’ll know each other over yonder, if we’ve got to go; but don’t give up yet,” she said, and struck out bravely.

She swam as straight for the light as she could. Nan watched her little figure buffeting the waves.

"I brought this on her," she said to herself, and she sent up a wild prayer for Rena's safety. Then she steadied her voice and repeated her cry for assistance.

Rena heard it as she swam on and on, nearing the light slowly—so slowly, she thought, though she was swimming with a speed that only despair could lend. She rested occasionally, lying on her back, and then resumed the active position with renewed vigor. Nearer and nearer to the light. But now she felt her strength failing her.

"Oh, I can never reach it! I must give up!" she thought. "I must give up! I will not give up! Nan must not die!" her heart answered; and again she struck out, though now so tired she felt more than willing—if only herself were concerned—to give up and sink under the waves to rest.

But the light was still to be seen, and the dog, probably scenting her on the wind, began again to bark. She could hardly hear Nan's voice now. She must have swum a long way. Must she give up when help seemed close at hand?

A thought came to her. She would try her voice now—now that she was so much nearer. Why had it not occurred to her before?

She stopped swimming, rested a brief while, then sent all her strength into a cry, wild, shrill, despairing.

It was answered before its echo died away.

"Ay, ay!" shouted a man's voice from the misty darkness not very far away. "Where are you?"

"Here!" cried Rena, with almost a last effort of strength.

She could barely do more now than keep herself afloat, but she knew she had succeeded. Help would come. Pray God it would not be too late—too late to save her friend.

She listened for her voice. She heard nothing—nothing

in the direction to which her ear was strained; but sounds of rescue came from the spot whence the voice had issued. She was now sure this was a vessel. The east was beginning to brighten, and she could see before her, as she lifted her head, a black mass outlined against the sky. She heard voices, and more lights flashed out, then came the splash of a boat lowered into the water, then the sound of oars, and again the shout:

“Where are you?”

“Here,” she answered once more.

Guided by her voice, the boat came toward her, flying before the vigorous strokes of oars in the hands of strong men.

“There she is!” cried a voice; and the next instant the exhausted girl was drawn into the boat and supported by the arms of her two rescuers.

“Drink this,” said Cyril Thorne, putting a flask of brandy to Rena’s mouth.

She drank a mouthful of the stimulant, and as soon as she could speak, she gasped:

“Don’t mind me. Take the oars—row—row for life—for her life—she is drowning! She is on a bar, in water up to her waist, and the tide is rising over her. She can’t swim. Row to the south-west—oh, row for life!”

Thorne and Hartley had seized the oars before the girl had finished her panting and broken injunction. The boat went flying through the water. Rena sat up and listened.

“I don’t hear her any more; she has stopped hollering. I’m ’fraid she is drowned—she and Banjo. Oh, poor little Nan!”

“Nan!” exclaimed Thorne, quickly. “What is the girl’s name?”

“Nan Haggard, from Lost Island.”

“Edmund Hoyt’s wife?”

“She ain’t his wife; Cora, the overseer’s daughter, is Edmund’s wife. Nan’s been livin’ with me in the old

fort. They burned the fort down, and locked us two up in a cabin. The overseer, old Gasker, done it. We got out to-night, and stole a boat and ran away. The boat sunk, and left us on the reef. We saw the light, and I swam here. The water was up to her waist when I left her. I'm 'fraid she's drowned; I don't hear her any more. Oh, call her, please, I haven't breath."

No need to ask. Thorne had already thrown up his head; his broad chest swelled with a deep breath that was sent forth in a cry like the peal of a clarion.

"Nan—oh, Nan!"

There was half a minute of silence, filled with agonizing suspense; then faintly over the waters came an answering cry.

"Thank God!" uttered Thorne, fervently, and Rena fell to sobbing and praying.

Not for call or for answer had the oars ceased their work. The boat seemed literally to skim the waves like a flying sea-gull. The streak of light in the east continued to broaden. Day was breaking swiftly, as it breaks in the tropics. Thorne hurriedly drew a spy-glass from his pocket and applied it to his eye with his left hand, while the right still swept the oar back and forth in its lock.

"I see a figure," he said, presently; "I see a head and shoulders above the water."

"Only one?" cried Rena. "Banjo was with her. Banjo's crazy, so folks say, but he wouldn't leave Nan—never!"

"There is only one figure, I think," said Thorne again. The glass trembled in his hand. "Stop!" he cried, suddenly—"there are two heads."

"Banjo's took her in his arms; she's little, and the water got up to her chin, and Banjo's holdin' her up," cried Rena. "Oh, Banjo! hold her fast. Blessed Virgin, make him strong!" she screamed, as she stood up in the boat and stretched out her arms in frantic appeal.

"We'll reach them in time," Thorne said, reassuringly.
"Can the man swim?"

"Oh, yes, Banjo can swim."

"If his strength fails and he can not hold her up any longer, he will try to swim with her," was Thorne's hope, but he did not speak it; he saved his breath for the work he was doing. He and his young comrade were counted the best oarsmen that had ever propelled a boat in the waters around St. Luke's. They proved their claim to the distinction by their work to-night. The boat shot across the waves as though it were hurled from a catapult.

"Five minutes more and they are saved!" cried Hartley.

Thorne said nothing, but his oar cut the water with long, steady strokes; the veins stood out on his forehead, and the moisture fell in great drops from his face.

Five minutes more and the goal was reached. Nan and Banjo were saved.

Nan was pale and weak from the terrible ordeal. Banjo looked ghastly, and when they pulled him into the boat he fell upon the floor like one dead. Nan forgot her late peril—forgot to thank her deliverers, forgot even to look at them. She dropped on her knees beside her faithful servitor. She lifted his head and swept the wet, gray hair from his closed eyes.

"Banjo, are you dead?" she sobbed. "Look at me, Banjo."

A hand lifted the wrist of the daft mandolin player and felt for the pulse.

"He is not dead," said a voice she knew. "Be comforted. Let me attend to him."

She looked up and met the kind, grave eyes whose look she so well remembered.

"Oh! Doctor Thorne, is it you? Was it you who came to our rescue? I am so glad!"

Her eyes shone with joy. Then she looked down at Banjo.

“You will not let him die?” she said.

“He is in no danger of dying, I hope. He is overcome with the fatigue and terror he has passed through. So are you, only excitement keeps you from giving up. What you all need and must have is rest—a long, good sleep. You will get it on the ‘Curlew.’ We will row back with all possible speed. Then you will go into the cabin, take off your wet clothes, wrap yourselves in whatever my old stewardess can find for you, and lie down and go to sleep. See, your faithful friend is reviving. He is drinking this stimulant. That’s a brave fellow! Now you are all right,” he said, as Banjo swallowed another mouthful of the brandy, opened his eyes and sat up.

His look fell first upon Nan, who bent over him; his dull eyes lighted up with joy. “Anabel!” he murmured. Then his glance rested on Thorne’s face.

The first rays of the rising sun touched that fine face with radiance—the noble brow, the kind eyes, the grave yet smiling mouth. As Banjo saw this face, he started, his brow contracted; he seemed to struggle more strongly than ever to break the chain that bound his intelligence. It was many years since the poor prisoner on Lost Island had seen a man like this—with the stamp of intellect and of gentle feeling upon his face.

To Nan, too, this face seemed worthy to be illumined by the virgin sunrise. She smiled in deep content, as she drew close to Rena and took her hand.

“I said a prayer for you, dear Rena, when you swam away into the darkness. I prayed God would send an angel to help you and us—and the prayer was answered,” she whispered, casting a radiant look at Thorne.

He did not hear her; he was busy making the seat comfortable for Rena and herself, but her words came to Hartley’s ears. His brow darkened.

“He gets all her gratitude,” he thought. “My arm did as much to save her as her ‘angel’ Thorne’s.”

The cloud did not quite pass from his face, when she recognized him, and held out her little hand, saying:

“And you too came to our rescue. How thankful we are!”

She was too worn out for further utterance.

Thorne would have wrapped his coat around her wet little figure, but she would have him put it around Banjo instead. She was thickly clad, but Banjo and Rena had on thin, cotton clothes. Rena laughed at the idea of being wrapped up in Hartley's coat, but she was too exhausted to resist, as he and Nan put it around her.

Nan looked at Banjo as Thorne wrapped him up. He was a piteous sight, with his blank, wistful, bewildered face and wet gray hair. Nan wrung the water from his hair and beard as best she could. Then she laughed, for she saw peeping out from behind the beard the little sleek wet head and bright eyes of Dicky, the squirrel.

“Poor, faithful dear!” she said. “He has passed through fiery and watery trials. His good banjo is wrecked, but his Dicky is safe. He shall have a new, good banjo when I can buy one.”

“And now to our oars,” Thorne said. “We must get to the ‘Curlew’ as quickly as we can, and these poor, wet fugitives must have food and sleep.”

It was past noon that day when Nan, leaving Rena still asleep in the little cabin, came up on the deck of the “Curlew.” Her clothes, nicely dried in the breeze and the hot sun, had been brought to her by the kind old mulatto stewardess. The dress of thin, fine wool hardly seemed the worse for its sea-bath, and the bright handkerchief tied over her black curls in lieu of a hat was becoming to her piquant face.

Hartley was first to greet her. He came to meet her, and said, with a look of admiration:

“Who would believe you had passed through fire and

water a few hours ago? You must be both salamander and sea nymph!"

Thorne was standing near Banjo, who sat dreamily caressing his squirrel and looking out over the water. The "Curlew" had her sails spread to catch the light breeze that was carrying her before it through the smooth, bright waters. She was approaching St. Luke's Island. Its white beach could be plainly seen, and the cottages among the cedar-trees and the wide-verandaed hotel.

"Come and sit here where you can have the best view," said Thorne to Nan. "I have been studying the face of your friend here. It is a remarkable face and head for a half-witted being. Depend upon it, this man was not born with this defect. His face shows the lines of past thought. He has had some injury to his head. It has clouded his intelligence, but I do not think it has destroyed it. I would like to study the case. Perhaps—"

Dr. Thorne did not finish his speech. A thought—a possibility—came into his mind.

"I should like to try," he said to himself. "It would be a dangerous experiment, but it might result in freeing that bound and struggling intellect."

He roused himself from his professional study of Banjo's face and head. He turned to Nan, and asked if she felt well and fully rested. Then he said, looking with deep interest into her young face:

"I do not want to force your confidence, but I would like to have you tell me about yourself—as much as you feel perfectly willing to tell of your life before I met you, and of what has happened to you on Lost Island. I have an object in wishing to know your history. I feel sure you have been wronged by those who should have protected you. I want to find out, if possible, their motives. It may be I can be of service to you."

"I will tell you everything," Nan said. "You are so kind; I feel that you are my friend."

And she told him the story of her life from the time she was made an orphan in that strange, terrible way to the events of last night. She told him of her father—of his mine of Bright Hopes, and the cruel disappointment—the disappearance of the gold vein, which caused the deserted mine to be renamed Dead Hopes. She told him how Stephen Brent had bought the mine of her and the tract of land lying on Haggard Creek the morning she was married; and she did not hide from him how artfully she had been deceived by Selma into marrying her son, and how she had sent the two, immediately after the marriage, to that dark corner of the world, Lost Island, and had promised pay and continued position to the overseer on consideration that he would prevent her leaving the island.

Thorne listened without comment, only asking a quiet question now and then. His face betrayed his interest, his sympathy, and his strong indignation when he heard of the deception that had been practiced upon her, and of the insults and dangers she had endured on the island.

When she had ended he said, tenderly:

“My child, this is a strange, sad story. I am glad you have told it to me. I think I understand why you have been made a victim, innocent and trusting as you were. At least, I have formed an idea of the motives that impelled this woman. Her son is merely a blind tool. Her husband is also an instrument in her hands, but with him may lie the first wrong. That remains to be found out, and I will do my best to find it out. I am going to the city on the return trip of the steamer in a few days. I will look into your affairs closely, and will consult a shrewd lawyer. Meantime, what do you wish to do—where do you wish to go? In a word, what are your plans?”

“I have none,” said Nan. “I am a leaf adrift upon the waves.”

“Let me direct your course for a little while then. In

a few moments we will land at St. Luke's. A mile back from the beach, in a pretty cottage, lives Hartley's mother, a refined and lovely woman. She has lived there for years, a recluse with her books and her music, even while her son was away at school. But she ought to have companionship. A bright spirit, such as yours, would be a boon to her. She would be more than glad to have you for a companion; and little Rena could stay with you and be a helper in the light housework, if she liked. Do you think such an arrangement, for awhile, would please you?"

"It would be all I could wish. You are most kind to make it for me," Nan said, lifting her lovely, thankful eyes to his, and then blushing with happiness as she met their gravely tender look. "I will not be dependent, nor shall my friends," she hastened to add. "I have with me, around my neck, in a little leather bag, the money my unlucky heritage brought. It will pay my board—and yes—and Banjo's. I must take care of Banjo."

"Banjo shall be my care—my patient, if you will permit," said Dr. Thorne. "I am deeply interested in his case. It may be very valuable to me, and possibly I may be of help to him."

"Is it so? Oh, I shall be so glad if you can help Banjo. How good you are! How kind of Providence to send you to our help. Has not everything come out so well, so brightly, and only a little while ago all seemed so dark. But," she added, presently, "are you quite sure the lady, your friend's mother, will like to have me stay with her?"

"Her son shall answer for her," Thorne said, and he beckoned Hartley to come near, and told him of the arrangements he had proposed.

"Miss Haggard wishes to be sure of her welcome," he said.

The young man's face was radiant.

"She will be more than welcome," he said. "My mother was longing to have a young companion for her

own sake and for mine. She could not have one that would please her better; and as for me—”

His eyes met Nan's, and his handsome face flushed rosily. Nan's too colored under his look of ardent admiration. Dr. Thorne saw the expression in the eyes of both. A look of surprise, a shadow of pain crossed his face for an instant, but soon his brow resumed its wonted calm.

CHAPTER XXVI.

LATER in the afternoon the “Curlew” shut her white wings at the pier of St. Luke's Island, and Thorne, accompanied by Hartley, went ashore to get a carriage to convey his triple charge to their new home.

Nan heard of the carriage with a feeling of relief. She shrunk from the thought of walking past the hotel and the little group of cottages, with a shop or two and a pretty Gothic church, that clustered stragglingly about it.

The shaded veranda of the hotel had groups of men and women standing looking out, lounging on the settees, or swinging in hammocks, idly waving palmetto fans, and enjoying the *dolce far niente* of life upon a half-tropic island.

St. Luke's, though not a fashionable winter resort, always had its one large hotel, and the cottages, lodges, and villas scattered over its circuit, occupied in fall and winter by health or pleasure-seekers.

Nan realized that she was hardly presentable before these well-dressed denizens of the island. Her clothes and shoes had been carefully dried and brushed; but the red-and-yellow head-covering, though becoming, was not conventional; while Rena's bare brown legs and feet—she had kicked off her coarse shoes when she set out to swim—showed conspicuously below the short skirt of her blue calico gown. But Rena was too happy to be conscious of her deficiencies. She was looking with delight at the

scene before her—thinking the white, wide-verandaed hotel, with its flag flying from the cupola, the grandest of buildings; admiring the women in muslin gowns, the men in blue and white flannel, and the tiny painted pleasure-boats that lay rocking at the pier. Not a thought of her own appearance came into her head until Nan said, laughing:

“I wish Banjo had a harp. We would march out and go to the hotel, and play and sing for pennies. We look like a band of Italian street minstrels I saw in the city. I wonder what Mrs. Lytton will think of our appearance?”

Rena looked down at her bare feet, and involuntarily drew them back. But the short skirt would not hide them.

“We do look comical by the side of them fine folks,” she said; “but they’re just outer the band-box, and we are outer the fire and the salt waves. Banjo’s all right, though—Banjo looks beautiful! The doctor’s black clothes fits him like they was made for him. He looks like the picture of a king in that old Shakespeare book you used to read. You wouldn’t know anything was wrong till you looked close at him. His eyes ain’t like other folks’; they’re kind of helpless and wanderin’ and pitiful—like a baby’s when you lay him on the grass and make believe you’re goin’ to leave him there. I’ve nursed babies, and I’ve seen ’em look like Banjo does this minute. He’s tryin’ to make out what it all means. He knows this ain’t Lost Island. It’s the first time he’s seen any shore except Lost Island for goodness knows how many years. He ain’t put his foot off the place since I came there when I wasn’t much mor’n a baby. He’s troubled now tryin’ to think. See how he looks at you, Nan, and holds to your hand like he was afraid he was goin’ to lose you.”

Nan smiled up reassuringly into the face of the strange being, and pressed the big hand that clung to her like a child’s. Yes, it was pitiful to see the look in the eyes of this man—formed in such a grand mold—looking picturesque, even distinguished, now that he was dressed in

black cloth, with his long, iron-gray hair combed out by Nan and falling in wavy masses away from his broad, high brow. He looked like some grand benignant genius whose soul had been stolen away by the spells of an envious sorcerer, leaving him astray like a child in a world that bewildered him with dim visions of the past, and shadowy gleams of intelligence coming now and then to perplex and sadden him.

But for these recurrent bewildering gleams he would have been happy as a child in Nan's presence. He kept by her side with a half-protecting, half-clinging devotion, and she in turn had felt a strong bond of sympathy between them even before he had saved her life in the midst of the rising waves, as she had rescued him from the flames.

"There is the carriage!" Rena cried, excitedly, as a hack drove to the pier.

Dr. Thorne got out and came on board the yacht. He carried a large bundle in brown paper which he handed to Rena, telling her to go below and see what was inside the big package.

She went, and presently came back on deck, her dark little face glowing with smiles under a neat straw hat trimmed with dark-blue ribbon, and her feet incased in pretty low shoes and dark-blue stockings.

She held out another hat of white straw, with a simple trimming of black ribbon.

"For you," she said to Nan, "and this is for you to put on to hide your crumpled dress."

It was a long raglan of some thin, gray material, and when Nan had put it on and Rena had buttoned it all down in front, it seemed with its loose sleeves a graceful and becoming garment. The hat, too, fitted perfectly.

"It was almost a shame to take off that red and yellow handkerchief, it looked so picturesque over your dark curls," Dr. Thorne said.

“It is so kind and so thoughtful of you to do this,” Nan said. “And how could you fit us so well?”

“Oh! I took your measure with my eye. I have the organ of size well developed. The stewardess helped me about the shoes. She measured Rena’s little feet on the sly. We will go now. Hartley has gone on ahead to tell his mother of our coming. You will find her a lovely, refined woman. She could grace a high place in society, but she has had trouble, and prefers to live in seclusion.”

“I am afraid we will seem intruders.”

“No; it is, as I said, best for her to have a companion, young and cheerful, but not too lively, sweet-tempered and intelligent.”

Nan colored with pleasure.

“I am glad you think so well of me. I hope I will deserve it,” she said.

“Think well of you?”

He looked down at her sweet, blushing face as she walked by his side to the carriage. She lifted her eyes at the same instant, and the glow deepened in her cheeks. She read a tender as well as admiring interest in those deep-gray eyes.

A drive of little more than a mile brought them to the home of Mrs. Lytton—Graywood Lodge, it was called, after the name of the former owner. It was surrounded by wide, inclosed grounds entered through a large, arched gate.

They drove through this gate beneath the arch of heavy carved wood-work, and through the grounds of mingled wild and planted trees—orange, pomegranate and fig-trees—growing among wild laurel and sea myrtle and cedar.

They passed two dilapidated summer-houses overrun with roses and wild bramble vines, and then on to the house.

Nan had expected to see a new cottage of the ordinary design and green and white style of the hotel. She was enchanted to see a time-mellowed building with four sharp

projecting gables—a half-Gothic design like the church. Indeed, they had both been built by the same man, a rich old bachelor, the former owner of the island, long since dead.

Tall oleander and Cape jasmine bushes in bloom lined the walk to the door of the porch.

On the steps stood Hartley and a lady, which must be his mother, thought Nan, for her hand rests on his shoulder as he stands on the step just below her. But how lovely she is!

She wore a long, white dress bound at the waist with a black cord. Her shape was slender and inexpressibly graceful, her face classically beautiful with the charm of mystery and melancholy in the large dark eyes, the lovely mouth, and pale, creamy brow and cheek.

She and Hartley came to meet them. She walked with a floating, undulating motion, and her smile and manner charmed Nan as she extended her hand to welcome her.

If Nan had never seen Selma Brent she would have accorded a warm liking to this lovely woman who received her so kindly, but she had learned, alas! the bitter lesson of distrust.

CHAPTER XXVII.

THE feeling of distrust came to her that first evening in Graywood Lodge. There she felt the first premonition of the shadow that was destined to chill her heart.

But for this passing shadow the evening would have been perfect, Mrs. Lytton was so gently, so winningly kind. She took Nan up to her room, a pretty chamber with a long, deep window in the gable opening on a balcony hung with golden-blossomed vines. There was a little room opening into it for Rena. Nan saw a large white-lined bath-tub full of fresh water, and lying on the bed was a pile of snowy clothes. Pointing to these, Mrs. Lytton said:

"I want you to try to make yourself comfortable in these after your bath. They will do, I hope, until you can have some clothes made. I have heard from Hartley how unfortunate you have been. I hope your troubles are now over. I am going now to shorten something of mine for Rena to put on. I am so slender my gowns will fit you both, only they are too long."

She was gone before Nan could thank her.

The bath and the change of clothes were most refreshing. The simple white muslin gown fitted almost perfectly, and with the sash of blue ribbon and the black slippers and white stockings that Nan found beside it, made a charming toilet. A few flowers fastened to her belt and a blue ribbon tying back her curls completed her metamorphosis. Rena, too, when she emerged from her little room where Mrs. Lytton had been fitting her up, did not look at all like the same girl who had gone into it. Her cheeks were glowing with the recent scrubbing; her hair smoothly put back, plaited, and tied with ribbon. She had on a short, pretty Mother Hubbard gown of white muslin dotted with black. Mrs. Lytton brought her down and exhibited her with pride.

"The little one is not so bad looking," Hartley said to Thorne.

"No, indeed; there are possibilities of beauty in the girl," he answered, looking keenly at her.

He called to her to come and talk to him. In half an hour he found out that there were mental as well as physical possibilities in Rena.

"She is very bright," he said to Mrs. Lytton. "She must have a teacher. I should like to see her two years from now, if she has any opportunities in the meantime. She tells me Nan has been reading with her while the two lived up in the old fort with Banjo as a protector."

Nan came in while he was speaking. Hartley had been watching the door for her appearance. His face lighted

with admiration when he saw her. The elder man, who had seen many beautiful women, looked at her and felt her peculiar charm. It was in the innocent sweetness of her smile, in the soul that shone through her dark, soft eyes, in the unconscious grace of her slim but rounded figure.

She was radiant with joy and thankfulness. She took Hartley's hand that he held out to her, and then blushing at the pressure he gave it, she drew it away and came up to Mrs. Lytton and Thorne.

"It is like a sweet dream that we are here, safe and sheltered, after all the trials and perils of yesterday and last night," she said, putting her arm around Rena. "Last night we were on Lost Island, prisoners in Gasker's cabin, seeing hardly a hope of getting away. We did not feel that we had a friend in the world, except poor Banjo, and we didn't know but he was dead. Now we are here among kind people in this pretty house that is like the homes we read of, with its books and flowers and cottage piano. It seems too good to be true."

Her eyes were shining through tears. The change seemed, indeed, too good to be true. She had escaped a fate worse than death, then she had been saved from imminent death, and now she was free and in a home of peace and comfort.

"We are glad and thankful for you, my dear," Mrs. Lytton said, gently. "I hope you will be happy here with us."

"I thank you." And then looking at Thorne, she added, timidly: "But you will not let us burden you. Has Doctor Thorne told you that I have some money?"

He smiled.

"Yes; I have told her that you are a very rich young woman, and that you carry your wealth hung like a millstone about your neck, which fire and water have failed to harm."

He pointed to the slender black cord around her throat

to which was fastened the little purse containing the price of her patrimony.

“You can use some of that miraculously preserved fortune to-morrow buying your clothes,” Mrs. Lytton said. “Between us all we can soon make up a wardrobe for you and Rena that will answer until you can get a better outfit from the city.”

“We must not forget Banjo. Where is he?”

“Come and see,” answered Dr. Thorne. “He has been asking for you in his own fashion.”

He led the way out-of-doors. The sun had set. The breeze came fresh and cool from the sea, and gathered perfume as it passed over the Cape jasmine bushes loaded with fragrant white blossoms.

They followed Thorne through the shrubbery to a little outbuilding, half hidden by large, wide-spreading lemon-trees. It was a queer little house, two rooms below and one above, with a peaked Swiss roof. On the porch sat Banjo. He was happy, for he had found a substitute for his lost gourd mandolin.

Dr. Thorne had hunted up a banjo for him, and he was strumming upon it—playing some sweet, half-melancholy tune, monotonous, but melodious, like the rhythmic beat of waves upon the shore.

“This is my own especial perch,” said Thorne, “and Banjo will abide with me as my guest and patient. Already I think he likes me, and he seems to comprehend what I say to him. I want to study his case.”

“Do you think you can help him?” Nan asked, eagerly.

“I can not tell. It will take time and observation to know if there is any hope of curing him. He was not born an idiot. There is no defect in that head, in that nobly shaped forehead.”

Banjo had heard Nan’s voice. He looked around and smiled, beginning at once to play in livelier measure.

They left him playing, and took a short stroll through the grounds, returning just as tea was announced.

When it was over and they had gone back into the parlor, Hartley opened the piano and began to play. He dashed into a quick air, so lively and inspiring that it set Rena's feet and head in motion.

"Dance," he said, nodding to her; and she at once began a series of steps and movements spontaneous and untaught, but full of wild, fanciful grace. Never surely was a creature so supple, so agile, so quick to catch the spirit of music and reproduce it in her movements.

Nan had often seen her dance to the music of Banjo's mandolin, but to the others it was a novelty that called forth their applause. Hartley clapped his hands.

"Bravo!" he cried. "What a boon little Rena would be to the ballet. Everything the stage dancers do is so old and mechanical. Rena has the spontaneity of inspiration."

The child's dark face flushed with joy. Ambition was born in her young breast at that moment. But she was an unselfish creature.

"If you like my dancing I don't know what you would say to Nan's singing," she said, presently.

After this Nan had to sing. A song was found in one of the music-books which she knew. Hartley played the accompaniment, stealing upward glances at the swelling throat from which came those clear notes full of soul as well as of melody.

"You said truly, Cyril. That girl is surely out of the common," Mrs. Lytton said to Thorne. "Her future ought to be bright. If only she could have the position her gifts entitle her to."

"Come out on the piazza," he answered. "I want to talk to you about her—and other things."

Hartley had resumed his playing. Presently he looked around.

"Where is my mother?" he asked.

"She is walking on the veranda," Nan replied.

"With Thorne, as usual," he said.

His face clouded and he rose from the piano, went to the door, and looked out. He came back and flung himself into a seat near Nan. For a minute he was silent, listening to the low voices of the two outside. Then he looked at Nan, and asked, abruptly:

"What do you think of Doctor Thorne?"

Nan was surprised, but she answered, promptly:

"I like and admire him. He is so calm and strong. And he is good, I think—I am sure."

"Don't be sure of anything," he cried, passionately, "or you will be deceived."

"Not deceived in Doctor Thorne. You can't mean that of your friend—your—"

"My benefactor, you were going to say. Yes, I know how much I owe him, in one sense. I wish I could cancel the obligation. I shall feel its sting until I do."

Nan's wide-opened eyes and pained face brought back his self-control.

"I have done wrong to speak to you like this," he said. "It was foolish. I ought to have kept my feelings to myself. But you don't seem a stranger to me. I think there is a bond of sympathy between us. I am really as alone in the world as you are; and I, too, have been wronged. I begin to feel, to fear, that I have been wronged past forgiveness." Again he looked toward the door opening on the piazza, and his lips shut together with a spasm of passion that half frightened Nan. Then his face changed, and he looked at her tenderly.

"Forgive me," he said. "Of late I have suffered so much—in silence. The strain has been hard. I am so glad you have come. You will drive off the dark thoughts that come to me. They fled while you sung. And you—will be my friend? You will care for me, won't you?"

Don't answer yet. We have to-morrow, and many sweet to-morrows to see each other in. Good-night. They are coming in."

He gave her hand a passionate pressure, and darted from the room. Nan was bewildered. A sudden cloud had half eclipsed her happiness. She looked into Thorne's face as he came in. There was keen, almost agonized searching in her look. If this man was not good, then the world must be full of hypocrisy and evil. Selma was not alone in being a fair-seeming lie. She hardly heard what Thorne was saying, until he called her attention to Rena coiled up like a kitten, fast asleep, on the lounge.

"Poor, tired child!" he said, lifting her gently in his strong arms. "I will carry her up to her room."

He went out, accompanied by Mrs. Lytton, who bid Nan come on.

At the door of her room Dr. Thorne, coming out, stopped her to say good-night, and add that he would not see her at breakfast. He would be gone in the "Curlew."

"I am going to Lost Island," he said, "to have a little interview with that exemplary overseer, and with Edmund Hoyt. I am trying to get a clew to the motives that caused them to act to you as they have done."

"I think they were only tools," Nan said.

"I am almost sure of that. But why they were employed at all, what was the motive in sending you to Lost Island, and requiring that you be kept there, by force if necessary, this is what I shall find out, if possible."

"More trouble for my sake," Nan said.

"It is a pleasure to do anything for your sake," he answered, looking down into her sweet face, a look that made her heart beat more quickly. But the next instant she remembered Hartley's strange words, and she said good-night with a change of look and tone that made him wonder.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

IT was in the afternoon of the next day. Thorne had not yet returned. Hartley had asked Nan to come out into the garden and gather some figs.

They had filled the basket and were sitting in one of the old, half-decayed summer-houses.

"You say Thorne has gone to Lost Island. Did you ask him to go?" Hartley questioned as he sat watching her make a wreath of flowers for the basket.

"No; it was his own kind thought. He went to try and find out the motives of Gasker and Edmund Hoyt for keeping me a prisoner on the island."

"He takes great interest in your affairs," the boy said, his handsome lip curling scornfully. "I suppose he wants to earn your gratitude, and—your love. He would like to break another woman's heart and make her destroy herself."

"What do you mean?" cried Nan, lifting her startled eyes to his, the flowers dropping to the ground.

Then her eyes flashed indignantly.

"I believe you do Doctor Thorne a great wrong in speaking of him so," she said.

"Would to God I could think so!" he answered, gloomily.

She saw that he spoke from the depths of a troubled heart.

"I believe he has been kind to me because his nature is noble and helpful," she went on.

"I thought so once. I thought all that and more. I tell you no impassioned girl ever worshiped her lover as I worshiped that man—Cyril Thorne, my benefactor, my mother's noble, generous friend, as I thought then, the only friend of her solitary, blighted life. But now I think that he—he alone caused that blight."

“What can you mean?”

“This, if you can understand. You know your Shakespeare by heart, and when I tell you that now I look upon Cyril Thorne and my mother as Hamlet did upon his mother and her second husband, then you will know what bitterness, what shame, and, alas! what irresolution fills my heart.”

“Hamlet! Doctor Thorne and your mother!” cried Nan, half stunned with the revelation the words seemed to open to her. “Do you mean that they are married?”

“They could not marry, because my father is still living,” Hartley said, dropping his head.

“Your father is living—where?”

“I do not know. I never dreamed of such a thing. She had always spoken of him as one dead; but lately, since I met you on the steamer, I have gathered from words I have heard him say to her, when they thought themselves alone, that he, my father, is still alive. I heard her speak of disgrace, and then she said, ‘My poor Hartley! it will always be a stain on him,’ and he answered, ‘Hartley will never know.’ ‘He is the image of his father. If they should meet some day. Hartley will soon go out into the world,’ she said. ‘His father would not recognize him, and the name is different,’ was his reply, as nearly as I could understand; the tone was low.”

“Why did you not show yourself then, and call on them to explain?”

“Why did I not? I was so stunned at first. Then I hoped I had misunderstood. I could only catch fragments of their talk. My mother said I had not understood. I told her that I had overheard something. She was greatly agitated. She said I had not comprehended the truth, and she would not tell me that yet. I should know all in time. I did not tell her what I suspected. I could not—”

“What you suspected?”

“Oh, Nan, do you not see that I suspect, in the last few days only, that this man I loved and trusted so, this man I was willing to owe everything to—the roof over my head, my education, all—because I believed him so good, that now I suspect him to be my bitterest enemy—the one who has robbed me of name and parents, of a father’s love, and of a mother that I could honor? I ought not to tell you all this, but I must tell some one. And you, too, have known treachery; you, too, have been stung where you most trusted. You think it strange I should not have suspected before when I knew that this benefactor had no drop of my blood in his veins; but not a doubt of him ever entered my mind. I looked on him as almost a god. Then I have rarely seen the two together until this time. I have been away at school, and in my vacations he was seldom here, and I was so young. Oh, it came like a thunder-burst from a clear sky! But I can look back now, and things seem plain enough. I feel why it was my mother came here to live in nun-like seclusion—she so beautiful and cultivated. He brought her here to this, his house. He came and took her away—I was a child, but I remember; and how unhappy she was. They told me my father was dead. I had not seen him for some time. I have not a very clear recollection of him. We came here, and afterward I was sent off to school, and a woman—a kind, sweet soul who died last year—lived here with my mother. Often I have asked her why she did not go into company. She would not even go to the little town on the island. She would shake her head and smile sadly. It is clear to me now—almost clear—and yet I can’t tell her so, she is so gentle and sweet. I can’t tell her that I, her son, have such dark doubts of her. But it will come. It will come soon, the hour when I shall denounce them both, and revenge myself upon the man I have loved better than my life!”

“Oh, do not be hasty. Wait and be sure. I can not,

can not believe it!" Nan cried, sympathizing deeply with the excited boy, whose beautiful, mobile mouth was trembling in nervous agony.

Her own heart was torn with the struggle between doubt and belief. How could she think of Cyril Thorne as base and unprincipled? And yet how was this mystery to be explained?

At last she said:

"What did you mean when you said at first that Doctor Thorne had broken one woman's heart and caused her to destroy herself?"

"Oh, I might have done him injustice there. Once I thought he had been a suffering martyr in that instance. You did not know he had been married?"

"Married?"

"He never alludes to it. No wonder. It was a bitter experience. Yes, ten years ago, when he was only twenty-two, he married a beautiful girl. A year afterward she committed suicide. His enemies said he made her unhappy; that he was jealous and exacting. My mother says he was all tender forbearance; that his wife did not care for him. She loved another, and had only married him in obedience to her parents. But he was deceived. It was only after the marriage that he knew the truth. He found, too, that her mind was unbalanced. She gave way sometimes to fits of violent passion. She seemed to hate her husband, and tormented him in every way. All this he bore, and treated her with pitying tenderness. I am telling the story as my mother told it. Now I am tempted to think the blame may be with him. My mother says she tried to kill him. At last, in a fit of mania, she killed herself, and her baby, not a week old. The blow must have been terrible to him. He has never got over it. It is this that gives him that look of gentle sadness that once made me love him only the more; I thought it was like the look on the face of Christ. He has lived a kind of re-

close life ever since. He is a close student of science, and writes for the scientific and medical journals. He has made some discoveries very valuable to medicine, and would be a lion in society, if he would go into it, but he seems only to live for a narrow circle—my mother and those whom he can help. Listen to me singing the man's praises, making him out the hero I once believed him!"

Hartley broke off abruptly, springing to his feet.

"Oh, if I could believe so still!"

"Believe it still; believe it until it is proved that what you suspect is true," Nan said, earnestly, as she rose and stood beside him. "Put the dark thoughts away. The world is so beautiful—the flowers and the leaves, and this sweet old garden."

"And you, sweeter than all!" he cried, suddenly, catching her hands in his. "Oh, Nan, love me! I have no one to care for me much, and you, too, are alone! Let us love each other!"

Before she could speak they heard footsteps approaching. She drew her hands away just as Thorne's tall figure appeared in the arched door of the summer-house. As he saw the two standing so near each other, and noted then Nan's face changing color, a slight shade came into his face. It was gone in an instant. He said to Nan:

"I have just returned from the island. I would like to speak to you alone."

Hartley bent his head in a quick, half-mocking way, and went out. Thorne looked after him, a pained, perplexed expression on his face, as though he wondered at the change that had come over the young man. He did not speak until Nan asked:

"And did you find out anything at the island?"

"Yes." He sat down and drew her to a seat beside him. "I found out enough to know that you have been the victim of a heartless plot. Your guardian's wife seems to have been the instigator. She paid the overseer a sum

of money, and promised him a much larger amount if he succeeded in keeping you on the island. He told me all he knew. I used stratagem; I knew it was the only way. I invited him on board the yacht, and gave him a short sail and a dinner, with plenty of drink. The liquor unloosed his tongue. He told me you were dead—drowned; that you and Rena and the crazy Banjo had run away in a leaking boat. The boat was found at low tide where it had sunk on an oyster-bar. You were all three drowned. He seemed to have some remorse about it, but laid all the blame upon Mrs. Brent. She had caused you to be brought there as Edmund's wife, and had bound him by an oath, and still more by a bribe, not to let you leave the island. He did not know her motive, nor, he declared, did Edmund know it. He thought she wanted to get rid of both of you."

"Perhaps it was."

"No, no; I was sure her motive lay deeper. I heard something just now, since I landed, that makes it clear, if, as I believe, it refers to your estate. A gentleman who came on the steamer on her last trip told me that he saw Mrs. Brent at the opera the night before he left. She was in a box with some Washington magnate who was very attentive to her. She was pointed out to him as the beautiful woman, soon to be a widow, who had had a big stroke of luck. She had bought a few hundred acres of poor land as an investment, and it had turned out to be rich in gold. A company had offered her three hundred thousand dollars for it, and she had refused the offer. Nan, I feel sure this land was yours."

"But it is hers now; she bought it for five hundred dollars."

"The purchase is not valid. It will not hold good in law. I think there will be no difficulty in proving that she knew the value of the property before she bought it. Then you were not of age, and could not sell your property. Nor

had Edmund Hoyt any right to act for you. He was not your husband. The marriage was not legal. He had a wife already. Yes, dear Miss Haggard, you are free. Cora Gasker is Edmund's wife."

"Oh, I knew that," said Nan, quietly. "I told you she said he belonged to her."

"Yes; but I was afraid it was not a real marriage bond. I felt inexpressibly relieved to find that you were really free from that man."

His look, his tones showed how pleasant this knowledge was to him.

"They were married by the priest, and Mrs. Brent knew it. What a heartless woman she is! But she also knew that the priest had gone to parts unknown, and the church records had disappeared with him. Gasker and one other were the only witnesses to the ceremony, and Gasker was under her control; a little money and a few sweet words from her would seal his lips as to the marriage. Fortunately, Cora came back."

"I shall always be grateful to her," said Nan. "But now what can be done with my unlucky affairs?"

"They must be seen to at once. It must be ascertained if it is your gold mine that has so suddenly enriched Mrs. Brent, and steps must be taken at once to show that fraud was used in its purchase, and to get it back into your possession."

"How can I do all this?"

"I will see to it. I will leave to-morrow on the return boat."

"You? You have already done too much for me. How can I repay you? If this gold-laden ship of mine does ever come to port I can pay you as far as gold—"

"You can not repay me with gold," he said. "I do not want it, my little girl. I have more money than I can use. Money does not bring happiness to a seared

heart. Yours is fresh and pure. May your fortune, when it comes, bring you many other blessings."

"Oh, I think it would be happiness to help people you love. I would make Mrs. De Lacy comfortable, and, yes, I would build Miss Rachel a new cottage, and send Rena to school, and Banjo should have everything he wanted."

"What an unselfish little girl it is!" he said, looking smilingly into her sparkling face. "You would do all this before you bought a diamond necklace?"

"Oh, yes, though I should like the diamonds afterward. But I know it must be sweet to make people feel happy."

"And what would you give *me* to make me happy?"

"You have scorned my gold," she said, gayly.

"There is something better than gold," he answered—"something I should prize far more than gold; but it has not been for me, and it never will be, I fear."

He was speaking as though to himself, low, and in an absent way, though his eyes were bent upon her—those deep, earnest eyes with their shade of melancholy.

She was silent, for the suspicion Hartley had put into her mind rose quickly to her recollection. She turned suddenly cold.

"You must be very tired," she said. "You had better go in and have a cup of tea." She moved in the direction of the house as she spoke. "What will Mrs. Lytton say to your going away so soon, and on this business for me, that may turn out only rainbow gold?" she was impelled to ask as they walked along.

"Mrs. Lytton is good enough to think that what I do is right," he answered, and Nan grew yet more cold and constrained.

Hartley stayed by her so closely all the evening that she had no further opportunity to speak to Thorne alone. Once or twice, when she was singing or talking with Hartley, she caught his eye, and its sad expression made her feel remorseful. He had been so kind to her; he looked

so noble, and he had known so much sorrow. How could she distrust him? But she had known Selma Brent, and she could not forget how sweet and kind that arch-deceiver had seemed.

“I will see him to-morrow before he leaves. I will make my good-bye kind at least, when he is taking all this trouble just for me,” thought Nan as she lay in her bed, sleepless and unhappy, wishing most earnestly that Hartley Lytton had never told her this miserable story. She said to herself that his suspicions could not be true, and yet she felt that his story had shaken her faith in the man she had looked up to as worthy of all reverence and belief.

To-morrow came, and Nan, who had not slept till late, did not wake until the sun shone in brightly at her window. She dressed quickly, and went down to the breakfast-room. Mrs. Lytton and Rena were there, and Hartley was standing at the window. He came and took his seat by her at table. Beside her plate lay a magnolia bud, its leaves glistening with dew.

“Did you put it here?” she asked Hartley.

He shook his head.

“It is a farewell token,” he said, with his half-sneering smile. “See!” He pointed to something that had been traced on one of the snowy petals, folded over the golden calyx.

Nan’s face clouded as she read the word “Good-bye.”

He was gone.

CHAPTER XXIX.

THREE weeks elapsed before he returned.

Nan had grown to feel almost at home at Graywood. The restful charm of the place, the beautiful, time-mellowed house, the old, rambling garden, the walks leading to the sea-shore, and the library with its book-piled shelves, delighted her more each day.

She employed several hours of every day in reading and in hearing Rena's lessons. Then there were the hours for sewing, when the three female members of the household were busy with their needles, while Hartley, from an easy-chair, or a softly swinging hammock, read aloud to them, or perhaps he played on the piano. He was a born musician. Knowledge of the art came intuitively; he knew nothing of the science, yet his slender fingers could evoke melody that seemed perfect to Nan's appreciative ear.

She liked best the dreamy, vaguely sad symphonies that he improvised as easily as a bird sings.

When the shadows lengthened and the breeze sprung up they went out-of-doors, sometimes walking to the sea-shore, oftener strolling over the grounds.

Mrs. Lytton went with them occasionally, but oftener they went by themselves. Rena would start with them, but she soon darted off after some diversion of her own—to hunt the nest of a hen that had started up from a clump of bushes with an exultant screech, or to feed the fawns or the ducks that skimmed the surface of a little miniature pond at the back of the garden.

So it chanced that Hartley and Nan were left very much to each other. They read and talked together, rowing upon the little lake or sitting in the old summer-house.

He made no more passionate demonstrations. He saw that Nan shrunk from these, but he was devoted to her in what she thought was a brotherly, good-comrade way that she enjoyed.

He was so handsome and winning it was impossible not to like him. Nan had a misgiving that his nature was bright and effervescent rather than deep. For instance, his bitterness against his mother and his fierce suspicion of Thorne seemed to have greatly subsided, or else he had determined to take Nan's advice and wait for proof of what he only suspected.

He was often moody, and often he was so cold and sar-

castic to his mother that tears came into her eyes, when he would either rush away, beg her forgiveness, or silently do some little service for her. But he did not again speak to Nan about that terrible suspicion. Did he think she could forget it? It rankled in her mind, it clouded the days for her in this pretty restful retreat.

“Oh, that I had never heard it!” she said to herself again and again. “Why did Hartley Lytton tell it to me? Why did he burden me with this miserable suspicion? It was cruel—it was unpardonable! I can not forgive him!”

Then she remembered that it had burst from him on the impulse of the moment. She came when the suspicion was new and stunning. It filled his thoughts, and she was the only one he could speak of it to. He had no other acquaintance here. He knew her own story. She too had met with treachery where she trusted. She could give him sympathy, and this sympathy—did he think of this?—would establish a bond between them. Had jealousy been another motive for his burst of confidence to Nan? He had seen that she had conceived a high estimate of Thorne. He knew this revelation would lower if not destroy it. Had this operated as a motive, unconsciously, perhaps, to himself, or had he been carried away by the strong necessity to utter the feelings that had been pent in his breast?

He was of mixed elements—this Hartley Lytton. But he was young—not twenty yet. He would have returned to college for another term had he not been taken ill and left so weak that Dr. Thorne decided he must recuperate.

Thorne had nursed him through that illness when he was away from his mother—for he had been seized at college—with all the skill of a physician and all the gentleness of a woman. He admitted this to Nan, in a spasm of remorseful feeling, the tears coming into his eyes.

Whatever was his motive for confiding his suspicion to Nan, its effect upon her was most unhappy. It marred

for her the noble picture of a good man, such as she had conceived Cyril Thorne to be. It made her regard Mrs. Lytton with distrust. She felt that this fair woman, who had secluded herself so utterly from the world, must have some mystery in her life. She saw the melancholy on her brow and in her eyes. Had she in truth left her husband, and given up friends and the world and her own good name for Cyril Thorne? She must have been most beautiful then—ten years ago. She was still lovely, and she could not now be more than thirty-six. Was her husband still living, and was this the reason Thorne had never married her? Did this account also for his own isolated life, when he had wealth and talent and skill in his profession to make him an admired and useful member of society?

There was a mystery, Nan felt sure, and though it was hard to believe such evil of a man who had waked an almost worshiping regard in her young breast, yet how else could the strange relation between Thorne and Mrs. Lytton be accounted for?

Nan felt a strong sympathy for Hartley, and this and their congeniality in age and tastes drew them together during the days that Thorne was away.

No word came from Thorne himself. The steamer made only bi-monthly trips, and the time of its arrival was always a little uncertain at this season when the strong winds either retarded or hastened its passage.

So it happened that Dr. Thorne came unexpectedly. It was late one afternoon—just before sunset. Nan, dressed in pure white, was swinging in the hammock on the veranda. Hartley had just come from his room, and was standing by her, fanning her with the big palm-leaf he had taken from her hand. Suddenly he said:

“How well you look this evening! Like some white moon flower—mystic and sweet. When we are married you shall wear white all the time.”

She took his words jestingly, and was about to return a

playful answer, when the sound of a foot on the steps made her turn around. Dr. Thorne, in his gray traveling suit, stood upon the steps of the veranda. He had heard Hartley's words, "When we are married." Hartley knew it by the expression on his face; but Nan did not think of it. Her heart leaped with pleasure. She jumped from the hammock and went to meet him.

"You have come when we were not looking for you," she said. "The little wind-storm we had this afternoon must have kept us from hearing the steamér's whistle. You look tired," she added, noticing the pale, worn look of his face. "I am afraid you have been worrying over my poor, troublesome affairs, and have been disappointed."

"I have not been disappointed. I have good news for you, Miss Haggard—great news," he said, sitting down and drawing her into a seat beside him.

"When you have rested and have had some coffee, you will tell me."

"I will tell you now. It was your land—your mine of Dead Hopes—for which that company offered three hundred thousand dollars. They will pay a third more. The land is worth it. The mine is rich in gold."

"But it is not mine. It was sold to Mr. Brent."

"The sale was not valid. You were not of age, and the marriage was a fraud. The whole transaction was a fraud, and Mr. Brent and his wife can be prosecuted. You were coerced into selling the land. It can be shown that your guardian knew its value and had been offered a large price for it by this same company before he or his wife induced you to sell it to them for that paltry sum. I don't think they will make any attempt to defend themselves. I called to see Mr. Brent. He is in a half-paralyzed condition, and evidently not now a responsible being. His wife was present. At first she was all confidence. She said you had married her son, had sold the land to your guardian, and gone with your husband to his plantation on Lost

Island. And she added that you were dead. She had learned it, she said, from a letter just received from Lost Island. You had met with an accident and been drowned. You should have seen her face when I told her you were safe; and then I went on to tell that your marriage to her son was no marriage, as you had found out at once; that Edmund Hoyt was now living with his true wife, and you were coming on the next steamer to take possession of your heritage. She tried to pretend incredulity, but she broke down. I went on to state facts and make her understand that her entire scheme was known, and that she had laid herself liable to punishment by the law. She turned pale, and finally burst into a fit of crying and left the room. You will have no difficulty in regaining possession of your property."

"And this I owe to you."

"No; you would have found out your rights in the case after awhile. You must have done so; it was too plain. This immediate fraud has not occupied me all this while. I have been looking beyond it, at the conduct of the man you call your guardian, from the beginning of his sham stewardship in your case. I believe there was fraud, more than fraud—crime, at the commencement. I have been picking up stray links in the chain. I may never be able to put them together, but I shall try. Tell me," he broke off, abruptly, "how is Banjo? Where is he?"

"He is over at your house—your perch, as you call it. He is not well. He has his old trouble. You know he is subject to periodical attacks of terrible pain in his head. I have been sitting by him all the afternoon bathing his head. About an hour ago he fell asleep. It is time now that I went and looked after him."

"I will go to see him after I have spoken to Mrs. Lytton. I have not seen her yet. Is she well?"

"She is well," Nan answered briefly. The mention of Mrs. Lytton's name had changed the current of her feel-

ings in an instant. He felt the sudden coolness of her voice, and looked at her quickly. At that moment Mrs. Lytton came out on the piazza. She uttered an exclamation of pleasure.

"You have come," she said. "I have been listening for the boat's whistle. I suppose the rain and thunder of the storm kept us from hearing it. Come in and have a cup of coffee; you look tired."

She put her hand through his arm, leaning toward him tenderly. He stroked the back of her hand gently, his eyes upon her face.

"I have some news for you," he said, his voice full of caressing, and his eyes warming as they rested upon her.

Nan looked at Hartley. He was pale, and his mouth was compressed. His eyes flashed an answering look into hers.

"Let us go to see Banjo," she said, going to him. Dr. Thorne turned to say:

"I will come presently." He saw her put her hand on Hartley's shoulder. She was full of sympathy for him; and he saw Hartley take the hand and draw it half around his neck, bending his lips to her fingers. Then they walked away through the shrubbery together.

Mrs. Lytton saw Thorne look at the pair with clouded eyes; then his glance came back questioningly to her face.

"Yes, I think—I am afraid they love each other," she answered. "I did not dream of such a thing. They seemed like children to me. They are too young. You do not approve of it?" She looked anxiously into his face.

"It takes me by surprise," was all he said; and for many minutes he was silent.

Silence had fallen also upon Hartley and Nan, as they walked through the twilight along the winding path that led to Thorne's office. Hartley's fingers held Nan's hand in a convulsive grasp. At last he turned to her:

"You are all I have on earth," he said. "He has

taken my mother from me; taken her love; taken away my reverence for her. And now you—you are a great heiress—you too will be lost to me. You will go into the great world and be followed and flattered; you will cease to care for me, if indeed you care for me at all."

"I care for you very much. I can never forget you. Why should my having money make me change to you?"

"I don't believe it will; you are not like other girls. Oh, Nan, say that you love me! Say that I am everything to you! Say it, Nan, I am so unhappy! I want your love so much!"

Nan hesitated.

"You seem nearer to me than any friend, except Banjo and Rena," she began; but he interrupted her passionately.

"I don't want you to feel for me in the way you do for Banjo and Rena. I want your love. I want you to promise that you will marry me," he whispered, drawing her to him. "Promise it now, with your head against my heart; now, before the world rushes in to part us; now, while we feel that we are two creatures alone and without friends or kindred—only each other!"

He held her in his arms. The breeze shook the white blossoms upon them from the bough overhead. The flowers fell into the rings of Nan's soft hair. Hartley bent his lips to her forehead.

"Promise now," he said.

A cry burst suddenly from the bush beside them, the wailing cry of the death-owl, followed by that quivering sound so suggestive of the shuddering exit of the soul from the body.

Nan started up, frightened. The next instant Rena came running to them from the office.

"Just hear that screech-owl!" she cried. "It's a sign of death—and Banjer's so sick. He's waked up, Nan, and he's groanin' with the pain. I'm goin' to make a hop poultice to put on his head. There goes that screech-

owl agin! Don't shoo him, Hartley—that's bad luck. I'll turn my stocking wrong side out; maybe that'll make him fly off."

She sat down on the bed of matted vines and began to pull off her shoe. Nan had hurried on to the house. She found Banjo awake and seemingly in great pain. As she bent over him, Dr. Thorne came into the room. He injected an opiate into Banjo's arm that presently eased the pain. Then he asked to be left alone with the patient, as he wanted to try to get him to answer some questions about the exact location of his pain. He thought it possible to make him understand.

CHAPTER XXX.

THIS was the last time, for two weeks, that Banjo was seen by any one except Doctor Thorne. When Nan and Rena came to see him, early next morning, he had been removed to the upper part of the office, the sky-lighted study and laboratory of Cyril Thorne. Doctor Thorne told them his patient could not be seen.

"Is he worse—is he very ill?" Nan asked, anxiously.

"He is not worse. I hope he will, after a time, be better than he has been in a long while. I hope so, but I do not know. I can not let you see him for some days. Trust him to me. I am trying to do him good."

Dr. Thorne was very pale. His manner was quiet, but in his voice and in his eyes there were indications of a strange excitement. He hurried away from Nan and went up to the room where his patient lay.

They saw him no more that day. He did not come to lunch or to dinner.

Mrs. Lytton took a pot of coffee and some food to him on a plate that evening. Nan waited anxiously outside.

"Did you see Banjo?" she asked, when Mrs. Lytton

emerged from the silent house, dark except for a dim light burning in the upper room.

“No; I did not see Cyril even. He came half-way down the stairs, and begged me to make no noise. I left the coffee on a table for him. I asked about Banjo—how he was—and he said, ‘I don’t know; I dare not say.’”

Nan was racked with anxiety.

“What does it mean?” she asked Hartley.

“I believe it means that Thorne has tried some experiment upon Banjo.”

“What kind of an experiment?”

“He has cut into his head, perhaps, trying to find that pain. He is passionately fond of anatomy. I have known him to cut a live dog to pieces.”

Horror blanched the face of Nan.

“He is a vivisectionist, then?” she cried. “I have read of the cruelties they practice in the name of science. You make me hate him!”

Hartley’s conscience gave him a twinge.

“I think he helped the dog he cut. The animal had some internal tumor,” he said.

But Nan did not hear him. She was picturing Banjo, stupefied with opiates, lying like the dead, while Thorne cut or sawed into his poor gray head with the sharp, cruel steel.

“I will see Banjo—Cyril Thorne shall let me see him!” she cried.

The next day she haunted the office. She had knocked in vain. She took up her station in the piazza, sitting on the steps. Listening intently, she heard a faint groan.

“He is living still,” she thought. “He may be undergoing more torture from that heartless man.”

She heard Thorne’s step on the stairs—a light tread scarcely audible. He came down-stairs, and she heard him step to the door and open it, as though to let in the

fresh air and sunshine, for he did not come out. Nor did he see her until she rose and approached the door.

"I have come to see Banjo," she said.

"I am sorry you can not see him—I can not let you see him yet."

"You must—I must be permitted to see him!"

"I am his physician; his life is in my hands, and I feel it my duty to refuse your request."

"His life is in your hands, and you have tampered with it, through cruel curiosity and for the sake of what you call science. You have done him some deadly injury, perhaps killed him, and I have let you do this to the creature who saved my life, the poor helpless creature who could not protect himself."

"You think this of me?" he asked. "You suspect me of such brutality?"

His look, his voice, filled her with self-reproach; but the suspicion Hartley had roused in her came to her mind, and she answered, recklessly:

"I do believe it. Prove it is not so. Let me see Banjo."

"I will not let you see my patient until I think it is right," he answered, firmly.

His strong, grave face was colorless as marble. His lips were pressed tightly together. She looked up and met his eyes, firm, stern, but with a depth of sadness and a flash of scorn in them.

He bowed and turned away. Nan stood like one transfixed. Conflicting emotions swept through her. Could this man be heartless, unprincipled? Could he be, and look like that—so grand, so sorrowful? Oh, it must be so! Had she not seen, did she not know that he was the lover of this woman who had deserted her home and her husband for him?

And Banjo! What must she think? Had he sacrificed this poor being of benighted mind to his passion for experi-

menting? Was Banjo lying upstairs helpless, mutilated, dying, or perhaps dead? Thorne had always had a deep, and, it seemed to her, a morbid desire to probe into the cause of his malady. More than once she has heard him say:

“If I could only see inside that head. There is something there that binds and stifles the intellect, bars the nerve fluid from free passage. It must be so. The look in his eyes and in his face expresses struggle. The fettered intelligence is trying to break its chains.”

He had said this more than once. Had the desire to find out whether his conjecture was true got the better of his humanity, and caused him to sacrifice Banjo?

She could not know. She could only wait anxiously as the days went by. She saw nothing of Dr. Thorne. His meals were taken to him. He came out once a day, mounted his horse that stood at the gate, and rode away at a fast canter. In less than an hour he returned and went straight into his office, locking the door behind him. At night a light burned in the upper room until day. Nan looked at it many times through the night. Sometimes she rose and walked about the grounds, her steps circling ever around the small, silent building in the shadow of the big tree, with the one light glimmering from its upper window.

She was very unhappy. The feeling that she had by her words and manner placed a wide gulf between herself and the man she had once looked upon as so noble and lovable was very bitter to her.

“I am an object of dislike and scorn to him, and once he was so kind,” she said to herself. “I ought not to care. He is not worthy. But, oh, I wish I had never heard that wretched story!”

Banjo's fate continued to be a mystery. Mrs. Lytton told her he was alive; that Cyril Thorne believed he would get well, but then Mrs. Lytton vowed that she had never seen him.

“What if he is dead?” she said once to Hartley. “But that can’t be, for his body—”

“Thorne could consume it to ashes, bones and all, in his chemical furnace, in a single night,” said Hartley; and the distressed girl buried her face in her shuddering hands.

One day, instead of a saddled horse before the door of Thorne’s office, Nan saw the doctor’s buggy. He got in it and drove away. In less than an hour he returned, with a lady dressed in black and wearing a veil seated by his side. She got out and went with him into the house.

“Who can she be? She must have come upon the steamer,” Hartley said. “The steamer has arrived. I heard its whistle an hour ago.”

Hartley and Nan, walking slowly about under the trees, watched the door of the office intently. Presently Thorne came out. He made his way to the summer-house where Mrs. Lytton usually sat with her book or her needle-work. The sheen of her bright muslin dress could be seen through the vines.

Hartley, holding Nan’s hand, turned his steps toward the summer-house. They walked slowly, their steps making little sound on the soft sand, and they did not speak. The voices from the summer-house became audible. Nan would have stopped, but Hartley drew her on. They could see the two figures standing. Thorne’s arm was around Mrs. Lytton, her head drooped against his shoulder. Hartley stopped abruptly. Mrs. Lytton was speaking.

“What would I have done all these years but for your love? It has recompensed me for all the sorrow and disgrace—”

Her words were cut short. Hartley broke from Nan’s side and rushed into the summer-house. He stood before them, his eyes blazing, his frame shaking with emotion.

“You speak of sorrow and disgrace!” he cried, to his mother. “Who brought them upon you but that man—that seducer?”

“Hartley! what do you mean?” she exclaimed. “What is that you say?”

“Don’t try to deceive me any longer. I have had my eyes opened weeks ago. I know the bitter truth—what *you* are and what he is. I thought him my benefactor. Good God! what a fool I was not to know long ago why he played benefactor to the woman who had left her husband and disgraced her child for his sake!”

“My son, is it possible that you—”

“Hush!” he interrupted. “Don’t call me your son! I am your son, though I blush to own it; but now I will assume my right to protect you from that man. You shall leave his house to-morrow with me. If he attempts to speak to you again, I will kill him!”

“Hartley, you are crazy! How dare you speak to me so? How dare you say such things of Cyril Thorne, who has been so good, so—oh! if you knew all—”

“What is *all*? If there is any justification for you and him, let me hear it. I demand that you tell me all.”

“You shall have what you ask,” said Thorne. “I understand you. Your conduct toward me for some time past is plain to me now. Your suspicion was reasonable—natural, perhaps, yet you might have trusted me. You had never known me to deceive you. Come, follow me, both of you; you shall know all. It is time you did.”

With Mrs. Lytton walking at his side he led the way to his office. Hartley and Nan followed. Not a word was spoken between them. They were in a maze of bewildered thought and tumultuous feeling. What was this *all* they were soon to know?

They entered the office, the room that gave on the piazza, fitted up as a library and sitting-room. A tall woman dressed in black, the same who had come with Thorne in his carriage, was restlessly walking about the room. As the door opened she turned and came quickly

toward them. Her eyes were upon Mrs. Lytton. She stretched out her arms.

“My daughter, my own Emily!” she exclaimed, and threw her arms around Mrs. Lytton, passionately embracing her.

She lifted her face, wet with tears, and put back her dark hair streaked with silver. Still half embracing Emily, she looked into her face, a tender, remorseful gaze.

“Ah! you have suffered—you have suffered, my poor darling! I might have kept those lines from coming into your sweet face. I have been so wicked, so hard! But I suffered too. I longed for you; my heart ached many, many times. But I was too proud to take back what I said when I cast you off. I made that wicked oath never to speak to you. After your unfortunate marriage I forbid your name to be called in my presence. I said I would disown my son if ever he made friends with you, or did anything for you. He did not dare to let me know all the while he was caring for you, coming to see you here, taking a mother’s as well as a brother’s place, my good, dear Cyril.”

“He has been good indeed,” Mrs. Lytton said, turning to Thorne and laying her hand on his arm. “Never did brother do so much for a sister. I made him bring me here after my husband was sentenced and sent to prison. I wanted to hide myself and my disgrace as a convict’s wife from the world. He has been my consolation. He cheered me, supported me, educated my boy, your grandson. This is he, my mother. This is my Hartley, named for my father. Hartley, this is your grandmother,” she said to the bewildered boy.

“My grandmother!” he repeated, when the stately lady had embraced him, saying:

“I am so glad he is like our family.”

“My mother’s mother?” asked Hartley.

“Yes, your mother’s mother, who was so hard-hearted

as to cast her off when she made an unfortunate marriage, school-girl that she was. I have never seen her since. I might never have been united with her, in spite of the longing for her that I wickedly repressed, if sickness had not softened my heart, and if my son had not overheard me speak her name—not a month ago it was—and told me she was still living. Then I found that he had been caring for her ever since her husband's sentence, and he had not let me know, for I had vowed to cast him off if he made friends with her. I would have come with him at once, but I was too weak. I have come now as soon as I was able, and you must go home with me; you must let me make amends for all these years of cruel neglect, when, but for your uncle Cyril, you would have suffered from want and friendlessness—”

“And Doctor Thorne is my uncle—my mother's brother?”

“Yes; did you not know?”

“No,” Mrs. Lytton said. “He did not know there was any tie of blood. I am to blame for that. I felt I had disgraced the family name. I took my middle name, Lytton. I knew, too, that you had said you would disinherit my brother if he ever spoke to me. I was afraid you might find out, and so I kept the relationship a secret even from Hartley. I am afraid that was not wise, but I have always meant to tell him all when he was older. It was hard to tell him that his father is a convict—was a convict, for he is now dead. Let his errors and sins be forgotten.”

Hartley was like one stunned by a blow. Suddenly he fell at Thorne's feet.

“My friend, my guardian angel, my mother's brother,” he cried, “will you forgive me—can you forgive me for that vile suspicion?”

Thorne raised him and embraced him.

“I forgive you heartily,” he said. “What you thought

was reasonable, natural, though it never occurred to me that you could doubt me, Hartley."

"I was a short-sighted ingrate to do it," cried the impulsive boy. "And I made her doubt you," he said, looking at Nan, where she stood a little way off, pale and overpowered with emotion. "I told her what I believed. I am so glad she knows the truth!"

They were talking apart. Mrs. Lytton had made her mother sit down on the sofa and seated herself beside her.

"Go now," said Thorne to Hartley, "and talk to your grandmother. Make her feel that she is forgiven. She has done wrong, but she has been punished; she has suffered and hid her suffering through the pride she inherited. Sit down by her and talk over your plans for the future. I will take Miss Haggard upstairs to see my patient."

He approached Nan.

"Will you go upstairs now and see your friend?" he asked. "I think he is well enough to see you to-day."

She turned her pale face and her eyes, shining through tears, upon him.

"Don't speak to me so kindly," she said. "I have done you so much wrong in my heart. I have thought such vile things of you—of you, so good, so—"

"Do not praise me," he said, smiling faintly. "There is Banjo. Remember I have sacrificed him to my passion for scientific experiment."

"I no longer believe it—I no longer have anything but trust in you. Whatever you have done to Banjo has been for his good."

"I hope so," he said, as he led her upstairs. "I must tell you that I have tried an experiment, as you say. I have performed an operation upon him—a difficult and dangerous operation. I was so anxious about its result that I neither eat nor slept for days. I watched him day and night. I did cut, or rather saw, into his skull, Miss Haggard."

“Oh, Doctor Thorne!”

“I performed the operation known as trepanning. I did it to save his life. He would have died eventually from the pressure on his brain, caused by the indention of his skull, the result of a blow on the head. It was this that caused his mental derangement. I hoped to relieve him. There was a great risk, I knew; but the danger is past. He is rapidly getting well. His splendid constitution helps him wonderfully. But I must beg you to be cautious. Do not give way to any excitement, any agitation when you see him. You will find him changed. And—and there is another reason why you will be agitated.”

“Another reason?”

“You will know it soon. It will be a great surprise, only do not give way to your feelings, for he is still very weak.”

“I will be careful,” she said, as he opened the door.

They had passed through the large sky-lighted room that was Thorne’s study and laboratory, full of apparatus, with books and shelves containing cases of instruments and large sealed jars with abnormal excrescences and diseased parts of the human body preserved in spirits. Wired skeletons stood upright in tall glass cases, skulls grinned from the shelves. There was a long operating-table and other anatomical appurtenances.

The room was empty. They passed through it, and Thorne, tapping first on a small green baize door, opened it, and conducted Nan into a small, softly lighted room quietly and cozily furnished.

In an invalid’s chair, with a table beside it bearing a waiter with jellies, grapes, strawberries and fresh-cut flowers upon it, reclined Banjo.

He lifted his head as the door opened. Anabel stood still in dumb amaze. Was it Banjo? How he was changed! He was pale and thin, and his head was bandaged, but this did not constitute the change. His feat-

ures, the whole character of his face was altered. Oh, now she understood—now, as his eyes fell upon her face and a vivid light flashed over his features. His mind had got free. Reason was on her throne. It was the light of intelligence, radiating from every feature, that made the wonderful change.

It was no longer a blank, soulless mask she looked upon, it was a face full of intelligence and feeling.

The flash that went over his face like illuminating lightning when he saw her was the flash of recognition—of tenderness.

He made an effort to rise, then stretched out his hand.

“Anabel! my darling, my daughter!” he cried.

She darted to him and knelt beside his chair.

He drew her face to his and kissed her again and again.

Then he put her from him, and, with one arm around her neck, looked at her.

“My beautiful daughter! child of my lost Anabel! how much you are like your mother, my daughter!” he said.

She looked up quickly at Thorne. Her look said:

“Alas! his mind is not yet right.”

He answered her, smiling:

“He is perfectly sensible.” Then he said to the sick man: “Mr. Haggard, your daughter does not yet know that you are her father.”

“My father!” echoed Nan, starting to her feet. “My father is dead. Why do you say my father?”

“Because it is true. He is your father, alive and restored to you. He did not die, as Stephen Brent reported. He was very ill with inflammation of the brain. He struggled back to life, but not to reason or recollection. Then Brent, the man whose hand had done the injury, sent him to Lost Island. He has been there ever since. Providence sent you there, his own daughter, and through you he has been rescued, and the dark scheme that deprived him of fortune, and almost of life, has been laid bare.”

“And it was Stephen Brent, the man who called himself my guardian, who did this? It was he who tried to kill you, my father?”

“It was he. He did a more damning deed. He killed your mother. She died trying to save me. I had come home unexpectedly to Brent. He thought I was in England. My wife told me of his conduct in my absence; his crazy passion for her; his proposal that she should go with him to Lost Island; his boast that he could be rich, that he knew where to find the gold; he could sell the mine for a fortune when it had come into his hands, as it would.

“While she was speaking, he came in, and I confronted him with his discovered villainy. In his rage and disappointment he seized a marble ornament from the mantel and aimed a blow at me. Anabel rushed between us and the blow fell upon her head and crushed it. As I bent over her he struck me on the head. I knew nothing more. I have no recollection of the burning house or how I got out of it. After Brent set the house afire he must have seen you in your little bed, wrapped you in the coverlid to keep you from seeing, and borne you out of the burning house, in some impulse of pity or remorse. I do not remember my illness. My life on Lost Island is like a dream: I had momentary glimpses of reason and recollection. They passed over me like waves. There seemed to be a tight band of iron around my head. Sometimes it was a band of fire. When I first saw you the band seemed to loosen suddenly. I thought you were my wife, for a moment, then I seemed to remember that you must be my child, and then the idea was gone before I could grasp it. It came again that night in the burning fort when you saved my life. I remembered for a moment, then the numbness and the stupor came back. The band of iron crushed out recollection. It came again for a moment when we stood among the rising waves on the oyster-reef—”

“When you held me up in your arms and kept me

from drowning until help came—until Rena and Doctor Thorne and Hartley saved us. Oh, how much we owe to Doctor Thorne! He has given me freedom and fortune, and now, best of all, my father!” cried Nan, turning to Doctor Thorne. She grasped his hand and carried it to her lips. She bent her head over it, sobbing in a paroxysm of joy and thankfulness and regret. “And I have been so ungrateful!” she murmured.

“You promised to be very quiet,” he said. Instantly she calmed herself and turned to her father.

“You have nothing to be grateful for,” he went on. “I have done only my ordinary duty as a man and a physician. I have, I fear, transgressed against my duty as a doctor in letting you have this agitating interview with my patient, Miss Haggard. Your father has talked too much. You must not let him say another word. Sit here by him and hold his hand. Your presence will be enough. I want him to get well as fast as possible, that he may go away on the next trip of the steamer. It is getting too warm here. If he improves as wonderfully as he has been doing he will be able to take the trip, and it will do him good. My mother will go then, and take my sister with her. Now I will leave you alone. I know you will obey directions and be a good nurse.”

He was gone with just a kind look, a smile, gentle but not beaming, such as the smiles he had been wont to give her before the cloud came between them.

Through the two weeks that followed, his manner did not change. He was all gentleness and thoughtful kindness. To his mother and his sister he was affectionate and attentive, but in his manner to Nan, kind though it was, there was always that slight coldness and constraint. She did not understand it. She thought to herself, “Gentle as he is, he is unforgiving.”

She was never alone with him. He seemed to avoid seeing her when there was no one else present. But he made

every provision for her comfort and that of her father; and he was devotedly attentive to Mr. Haggard, who convalesced rapidly, and was well enough to be taken on board the steamer when she made her return trip.

Graywood was left empty and deserted. Mrs. Lytton, with Hartley, accompanied her mother, going back to the grand old home of her childhood with mixed feelings of pain and pleasure.

There were mixed emotions, too, in Nan's breast as she stood on the deck of the same vessel in which she had sailed as a bride a few months ago. She remembered her bitter awakening, her grief and mortification, the kindness and tact of Cyril Thorne—how quietly and thoughtfully he had saved her from the drunken embraces of the man she believed to be her husband; how he had cared for her then and on board the "Curlew" in the storm.

How tenderly he had looked and spoken then! And again on board the "Curlew," after he had rescued her from the rising tide on the oyster reef. Oh, surely he cared for her a great deal then! His eyes had said so. Those misty, sad eyes, they had seemed to glow with an infinite tenderness and compassion for her. And now he was so different. She felt the change miserably. It dashed the happiness of this time of joy, when she should have been as gay as Rena herself—Rena, who was perfectly a-quiver with delight all day, dancing around "Banjo," as she would still call Mr. Haggard, and clapping her hands a dozen times a day as she said:

"Oh! it's just like the stories in that old picture-book of pap's that Gasker burned up in the fort. It's just like the tale about 'Aladdin and the Magic Lamp,' to think we've all got away from the old enchanted house, and Banjo's come out of the spell, and we are rich and got a mine full of lumps of gold to buy us a fine house and a carriage and horses—"

"And to get a school-ma'am for Rena," Mr. Haggard

would interpose, "who will teach her grammar and rhetoric and lots of things," whereat Rena's feathers would fall a little; but she declared her willingness to learn, that her adopted father and sister might not be ashamed of her.

Nan was sitting by herself on deck at sunset the last day of the voyage, when Hartley came up and sat down by her. She had avoided being alone with him since the memorable hour that showed them how unjust had been their distrust of Dr. Thorne. Somehow she felt disinclined to any confidential talk with him. She did not want him to make love to her again. His passionate avowal had thrilled her girlish pulses simply because it was sweet to be loved and admired, but it had not touched her heart.

When he spoke, as he presently did, of his love for her, and reproached her for the coldness she had shown of late, she turned to him and said, earnestly:

"I am afraid, dear Hartley, I do not respond to the feelings you have for me. I care for you as a friend—as a comrade; but there doesn't seem any place in my heart for love just now. I want to be everything to my father. He has suffered so much. He wishes me to be educated, and I must study and try to become accomplished. I am so young; you are so young—we have much to do to prepare ourselves for life. Let us not think about love and marriage just now."

A flush of disappointment came into his cheek.

"You talk sagely," he said, with bitterness. "Would you be so wise and cold if some one else asked for your love?—if Cyril Thorne—"

She turned upon him, her face pale, her eyes flashing. He did not finish his sentence.

"Forgive me—forgive me, Nan," he said, quickly. "I am so disappointed. I felt bitter. I will not press my love upon you again. I will wait and work—try to achieve something—try to deserve you. You may love me yet.

Promise me you will not hate me—you will not record my faults and mistakes against me.”

“I promise always to be your friend,” she said, and gave him her hand. He kissed it and kept it a moment. Nan heard a step near her—she looked, and saw Thorne walking away. She knew he had seen Hartley kissing her hand. Well, what did that matter? he cared nothing for her.

A week later they were installed in comfortable apartments in a hotel in the city. Mr. Haggard had had no difficulty in establishing his identity. Several of his former friends and acquaintances, men in prominent business positions, knew him at once. He drove to the home of Stephen Brent and had a short interview with that broken and dying man. He found him hardly conscious. He was alone except for a hired nurse. His wife was in Washington City. She had left him, and he was dying alone, with none to soothe the dark hours of pain and remorse. He was overcome at the sight of the man he had so deeply wronged. When he recovered, he acknowledged everything in the presence of a witness, and prayed Mr. Haggard to forgive him.

Though the blood of his idolized wife was upon the head of this man, Mr. Haggard could not withhold his pity and his forgiveness, the man looked so ghastly. His face was drawn with pain, his eyes, in their hollow sockets, were full of anguish and pleading.

He made some arrangements for his comfort, and went away, feeling his heart lightened of the burden of bitterness and hatred which he had borne against this man.

That evening Cyril Thorne came to see them to say good-bye. He was going across the ocean; going to be gone for some time. He would travel through Europe and a part of the Eastern Continent. He said he had long wanted to take this tour, but had not been able to leave home, having ties that held him, and other interests than

his own to look after. But now his sister and his mother were happy with each other, and Hartley could look after them. Hartley would probably marry before very long, and he and his young wife would brighten the old home and make his mother young again. They would not need him, and he would recruit in the meantime. His health had run down a little.

He looked worn and pale. Nan longed to have one word alone with him; to ask him why he was so cold to her; but his visit was short, and her father was present all the while. He shook hands with them. Nan was afraid he would feel how cold and trembling her fingers were. She was conscious that she seemed indifferent and constrained.

“He thinks me a shallow, ungrateful butterfly, vain of the good fortune that has come to me, and forgetful that it came through him,” was her thought. But she could not utter what was in her heart. She simply said good-bye, and wished he might have a safe and happy voyage, hating herself for the commonplace utterance. When he was gone, she hurried to her room, and threw herself upon the bed, sobbing as though her heart would break. It did not comfort her to know that her father had sold his gold-lands for three hundred thousand dollars, and that he had bought a beautiful new house which was being furnished and fitted up for their occupation.

Her chief consolation was Rena. Rena seemed to understand, and though the quick-witted girl said nothing to intimate that she knew the cause of Nan’s grief, her affection was a comfort. Then, too, it was a pleasure to buy presents for Mrs. De Lacy, and for Miss Rachel, and Mr. Slow, and take them to Haggard Creek, where she went with Rena to see her old friend in her tumble-down house, tell her all her wonderful adventures, and persuade her to come and live with them in the grand new house.

“I’ll go,” Mrs. De Lacy said. “I foresee that you and little Rena here are destined to be great belles and will

require no end of clever chaperoning. I will be a model chaperon."

CHAPTER XXXI.

THREE years later. It is an August day that has opened with brilliant sunshine, but suddenly clouded over.

Clouds and mists rest upon the mountain, a spur of the Alps, where Nan Haggard is standing. She is trying to find the path by which she came up an hour ago, when it was so bright. She left the guide and her maid sitting on a rock where they had eaten luncheon. She said to them that she would walk a little way up the mountain and gather some blue gentian flowers and some of the lovely mountain mosses with scarlet dots among the gray. She had gone on, springing from rock to rock until she had walked much further than she had intended or knew. And then the mist came suddenly about her, wreathing and folding like bands of ghosts. She turned to retrace her steps. She lost her way, and here she was wandering bewilderedly, not able to see many feet before her, and fearing every moment that she would step into some chasm or down some precipice.

She had called again and again upon the guide and upon her maid. Once or twice she thought she heard their voices answer her far below, but she could not locate the sound sufficiently to be guided by it.

She had not called for some minutes. She was using all her strength in the effort to keep self-possessed and cool, and to make her way as carefully as possible. But her heart beat quickly with a feeling of fear and a sense of loneliness as she went on and on among the interminable masses of granite and the few stunted pines and sparse bushes that only appeared to her as she neared them through the thickening mist. Oh! if she had a compass. Oh! if she had some companion. The solitude, the silence,

and all these ghostly wreaths of moving, chilly vapor filled her with terror and desolation.

Suddenly, through a rift in the mist, she saw a figure just before her—a man's gray-robed figure. Or was it a human-like shape of stone, such as had deceived her more than once?

It might be a man—a robber, an outlaw. She had heard that there were outlaws haunting the mountain fastnesses, who robbed travelers and threw them over the precipices into the rocky abysses below. She stood, doubtful what to do. Her heart beat so loudly with fear she could hear its throbs in the utter stillness.

The man turned. She gave a wild cry of joy and rushed to him, falling fainting at his feet.

Cyril Thorne lifted her in his arms, and put back the hair that had fallen over her face.

“Nan!” he cried, in amaze. “Nan—darling little Nan—is it you?”

He kissed her in his surprise and joy. She felt the warm kisses upon her lips as she was recovering, and when she opened her eyes and saw him bending anxiously over her, she burst out crying and laughing at once, clinging to him in her excitement and the strong revulsion of feeling.

In a little while she controlled herself, and sat up beside him on the rock.

“Did you drop from the clouds in answer to my prayer for somebody to come to my help?” she asked.

“Did you come with the mists?” he asked. “I thought you were the Maid of the Mist, when I turned and saw you in your gray dress and veil, and your white face. How came you alone?”

She explained how she had left her guide and her maid below, and had wandered on until the mists came and bewildered her.

“Papa and Rena and Hartley went on a little excursion to a lake in the valley this morning betimes,” she said.

"I had a headache and begged to stay, but later, when the headache had gone, I took a fancy to walk up the mountain. We have been here in the little village at the foot of the mountain for three days. We leave to-morrow. We are going on to Paris to join your mother and sister. They are there, as you know—do you not?"

"Yes, I know," he answered, a little constraint in his tone. "I am going to meet them there. I thought Hartley was with them."

"We have all been together until a few weeks ago. Papa determined to take a little run into Switzerland for Rena's sake, she is so fond of scenery, and she sketches beautifully. Hartley wanted to come with us, naturally—you understand."

"Yes, naturally; I understand. When is he to be married?"

"Oh! not just yet. Rena is so young, and she is not quite through with her schooling, but she has developed into such a bright, pretty girl you would not know her."

"What has Rena to do with Hartley's marriage?"

"What! Why he is to marry her. They have been engaged for several months. Did you not know?"

"I did not. I thought he was to marry you. You were engaged to him when I went away."

"I never was engaged to Hartley. I never cared for him except in a friendly, sisterly way. Your mother—your sister could have told you that in their letters."

"I never asked about you when I wrote," he said, his voice a little unsteady.

"No; you did not care. You had no interest in me. I was less than a stranger in your thoughts."

"No interest in you?" he cried, his tones trembling with strong passion. "Nan Haggard, I left my home because I took too deep an interest in you. I loved you, and I believed you and Hartley loved each other. I knew you did not care for me. I was too care-worn, too sad-

dened for a bright young being like you. It was madness in me to love you. I came away to cure myself of it—and I have done it!” he added, bitterly.

She turned to him, blushing, radiant. She put both her hands in his.

“Don’t try any more to cure yourself of the madness,” she whispered, “for I love you—I have always loved you. You are my dream of all that is noble and grand in manhood.”

The mists continued to wreath about the gray rocks, but they did not heed them. Thorne knew every foot of the way down the mountains. He had traversed the paths often alone, and had sat or stood alone on the gray crags, feeling himself a man who must strengthen and steel his heart against the softer emotions and unavailing regrets, who must go through life alone, doing what good he might as a panacea to his aching and empty heart.

And now—Fate had been kind to him at the last. He was loved; he would not go through life alone. He would have this little hand in his, and those sweet lips and eyes to cheer and inspire him.

THE END.

Over 65,000 Made and Sold.

**NEW ENGLAND
PIANOS.**

**Largest Producing Piano Factories
in the World.**

IF YOU THINK OF
Buying or Renting **A PIANO** It Will Pay You

TO EXAMINE THESE POPULAR HOME FAVORITES.

New and Elegant Designs in Upright Pianos in
Great Variety of Fancy Woods.

Special terms and lowest possible prices to
CHURCHES, SCHOOLS, SOCIETIES, ETC.

Low prices for cash or easy payments.

ILLUSTRATED CATALOGUES FREE ON APPLICATION.

New England Piano Co.,

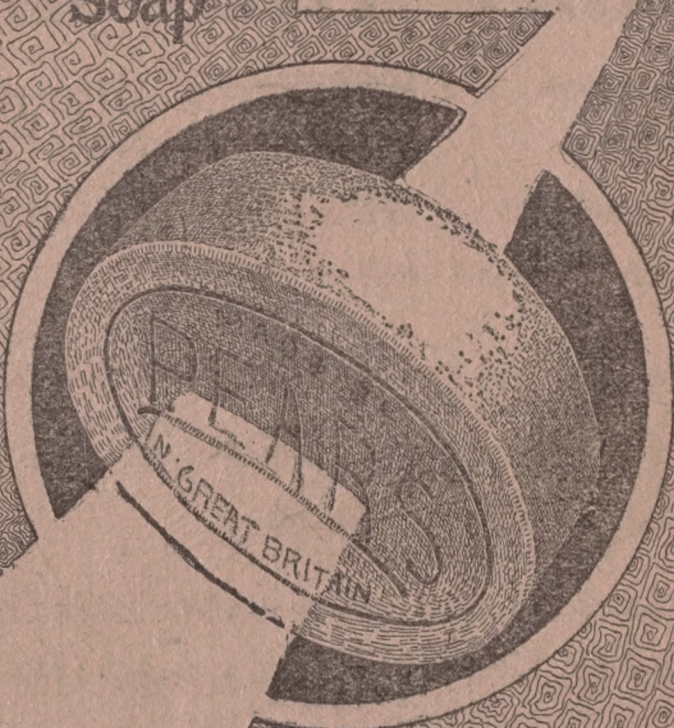
98 Fifth Avenue, Cor. 15th Street, NEW YORK.

BOSTON. CHICAGO. SAN FRANCISCO.

The Virtues of
Pears'
Soap

Pure, healthful, invigorating, agreeable, changeless in quality, lasting in use, economical. Soothing to the face and hands not irritating--imparting a bright, clear, beautiful complexion to both old and young.

have been
transparent
to the
world
for
more
than



**100
Years**

and is better to-day than it ever was.

For Toilet, Nursery and Bath.

20 International Awards.

There are soaps offered as substitutes for
Pears' which are dangerous--be sure you get **Pears'.**

THE ART OF HOUSEKEEPING.

BY MARY STUART SMITH.

WITH HANDSOME LITHOGRAPHED COVER.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

A thoroughly practical book on housekeeping by an experienced and celebrated housekeeper. MRS. SMITH is a capable and distinguished writer upon all subjects connected with the kitchen and household. She is one of the most popular contributors to THE NEW YORK AND PARIS YOUNG LADIES' FASHION BAZAR, where the chapters contained in this work first appeared.

GOOD FORM:

A BOOK OF EVERY DAY ETIQUETTE.

BY MRS. ARMSTRONG.

Price 25 Cents.

No one aspiring to the manners of a lady or gentleman can afford to be without a copy of this invaluable book, which is certain to spare its possessor many embarrassments incidental to the novice in forms of etiquette.

MUNRO'S STAR RECITATIONS.

Compiled and Edited by Mrs. MARY E. BRYAN.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

Cutting-Out and Dressmaking.

From the French of Mile. E. Grand'homme.

PRICE 25 CENTS.

The above works are for sale by all newsdealers, or will be sent by mail on receipt of the price. Address

GEORGE MUNRO'S SONS, Munro's Publishing House,
(P. O. Box 2781) 17 to 27 Vandewater Street, New York

AYER'S PILLS

are a sure cure for sick headache, liver and stomach troubles, dyspepsia constipation, and all kindred complaints. Taken in season they will break up a cold, prevent la grippe, check fever, and regulate the digestive organs.

They received the highest honors at the World's Fair.

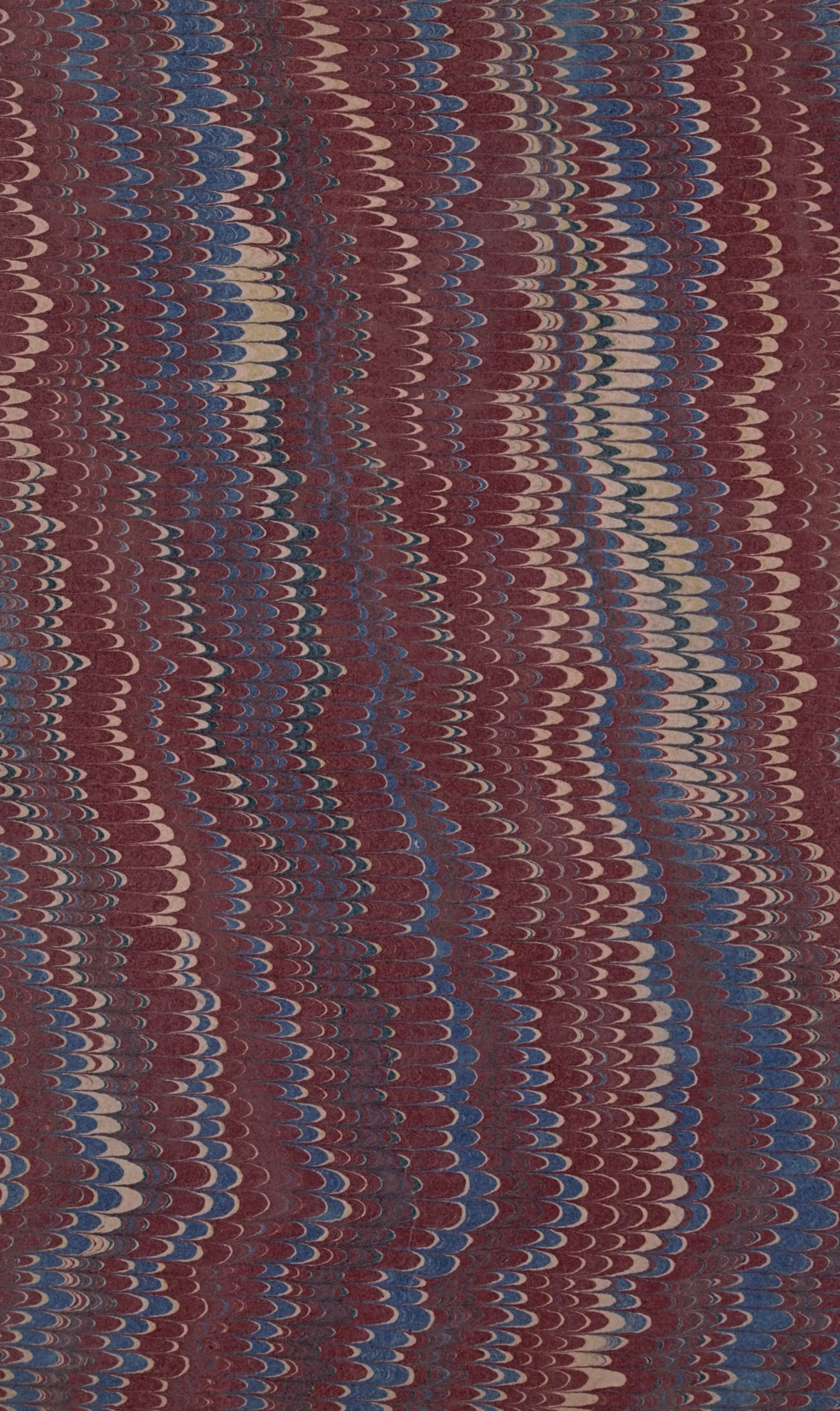
CURE

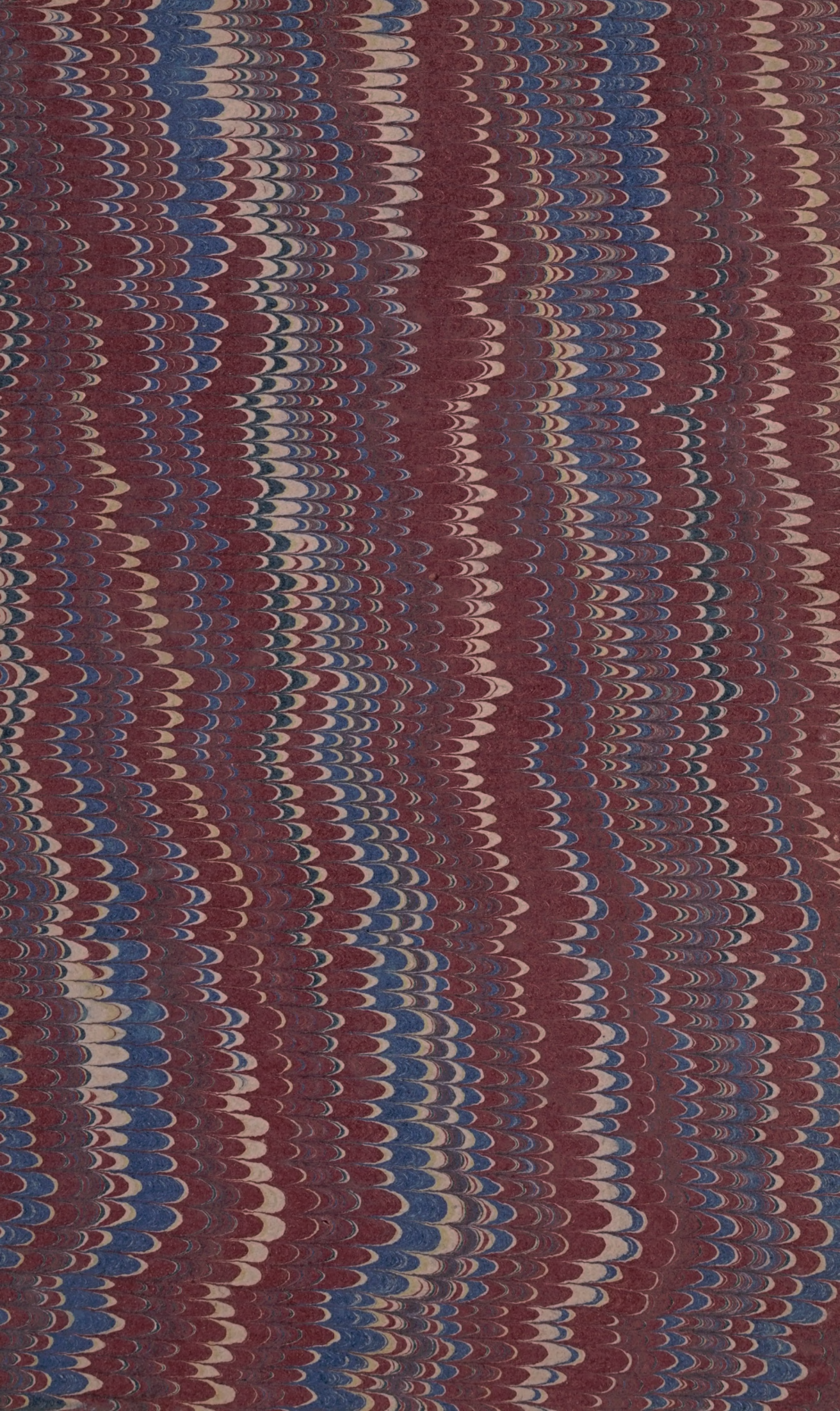
"I was troubled a long time with sick headache. It was usually accompanied with severe pains in the temples, a bad taste in my mouth, tongue coated, hands and feet cold, and sickness at the stomach. I tried many remedies, but until I began taking Ayer's Pills received no benefit. A box of these pills did the work for me, and I am now free from headaches and am a well man."— C. H. HUTCHINGS, E. Auburn, Me.



SICK HEADACHE

AYER'S SARSAPARILLA purifies the blood.





LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 002 226 437 0